

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC

**DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF
SELECTED SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES
FOR THE WORSHIP TEAM LEADERS OF MONTE VISTA BAPTIST CHURCH**

A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
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IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF WORSHIP STUDIES

by

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ABSTRACT

THE DOCTOR OF WORSHIP STUDIES THESIS PROJECT

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One of the foremost doxological problems of the twenty-first century is complacency in worship. Deficient spiritual development of the follower of Christ is rampant among Christians; many believers, suffering from this, have moved away from the purpose of man - to have a love relationship. This relationship has been replaced with a task-oriented spirit. No longer do we leave worship ready to make a difference for the Kingdom of God, but Christians come to complete a task and remove it from a long list of “to dos” in their busy world. Corporate worship has become habitual while lacking spiritual meaning. Worship Team Leaders at Monte Vista Baptist have not invested time into their own spiritual development so that worship leadership might overflow from a life full of the spirit. What can be done to bring awareness to this problem and possibly deepen the relationship between God and His children? Worship is a direct response to the spiritual maturity in the believer and as such ought to be given priority as private devotion, so that the worship leader provides passionate, overflowing leadership that is dependent upon the Spirit of God. A study guide that outlines the process of spiritual development through the disciplines of the Spirit would be advantageous to the worship team leaders of Monte Vista Baptist. This thesis project intends to provide worship team leaders of Monte Vista Baptist the skills to create their own personal daily worship time to bring about spiritual transformation that will enhance their leadership and experience in corporate worship.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The notion of worship has become as contentious today as it has ever been throughout the course of Christian history. Today, church leaders, look around to frequently see spiritual disengagement in congregational worship. People are choosing to engage in their worship based on the personal preferences for certain types of platform visuals, style and superficial production elements. Humans have always endured an internal conflict between the spiritual and the physical. Augustine in *City of God* describes the inner turmoil found within humans,

Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from men; but the greatest glory of the other is God, the witness of conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, “Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.” [Ps. iii. 3.] In the one, the princes and the nations it subdues are ruled by the love of ruling; in the other, the princes and the subjects serve one another in love, the latter obeying, while the former take thought for all. The one delights in its own strength, represented in the persons of its rulers; the other says to its God, “I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength.” [Ps. xviii. 1.]¹

Many people choose the former rather than the latter to guide their thoughts on worship. Their level of spiritual maturity is governed by the thoughts of self rather than the abundance of love for their God. Because of the lack of spiritual development among worship team leaders, it has become increasingly more difficult for these worship team leaders to worship God without settling into mental laxity or a surface-level spirituality. Richard Foster states, “The classical disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths. They invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm. They urge us to be the answer to a hollow

¹ St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo. *The City of God*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 365.

world.”² Immaturity has led leaders down a path that consistently allures them to please their own desires, rather than to look to God as the focus of their desires. Donald Whitney says, “God has given us the Spiritual Disciplines as a means of receiving His grace and growing in Godliness. By them we place ourselves before God for Him to work in us.”³ Do worship leaders spend enough time using the Spiritual Disciplines?

Psalm 29:2 proclaims, “Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.” God created human worship to rise out of a love for God flourishing through a personal relationship with Him. When this relationship is usurped, it becomes difficult for the spiritual life to be consistently fruitful. To find value in their lives, people have chosen to forsake the church and their spiritual formation. The church no longer transforms lives but encourages worldly likeness by equating worship with the traits of the world. Peter Scazzero states,

“Researchers have been charting the departing dust of those known as “church leavers”—an increasingly large group that has been gathering numbers in recent years. Some of these leavers are believers who no longer attend church. These men and women made a genuine commitment to Christ but came to realize, slowly and painfully, that the spirituality available in church had not really delivered any deep, Christ-transforming life change—either in themselves or others.”⁴

The church must bring about transformation into lives from the point of spiritual birth. This must begin with the leaders that lead the people in worship. Following spiritual birth, the infant Christian seeks spiritual food; unfortunately, many are not receiving this life-giving sustenance in church assembly – or taught to seek it. When spiritual growth is stunted, it becomes difficult

² Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 1.

³ Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991.18.

⁴ Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 10.

for worship leaders to see the need for worshipping an audience of One. Furthermore, when worship is shallow, the emphasis redirects itself to songs that lack depth, the promotion of talent, and self-preservation in worship leaders. Rory Noland states that “the first step in becoming a ...lead worshiper, is to become a vibrant private worshiper. You can’t lead others in an experience that you yourself aren’t having regularly.”⁵ Those in the field of worship leadership must experience worship with the Creator through a personal relationship.

Background of the Problem

Paul says in I Corinthians 14:26 (NIV), “What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.” The church gathers together to gain strength and perspective regarding spiritual matters and life as a Christian. Today, many equate the balances that are projected by the world onto the balances weighed by the church in the amount of instruction that the church should be offering to satisfy specific needs arising from the consumer mentality of the world. Jesus said in John 15:19, “If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.” The world already hates Christ’s believers and Christians today have difficulty restraining from distinguishing the things of the world from the spiritual realm. There are many churches inserting characteristics of the world into the church to attract more people to come to corporate worship at their locale. These characteristics create blurred lines and make it difficult for worshippers to determine

⁵ Rory Noland, *The Worshiping Artist: Equipping you and your ministry team to lead others in worship*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 22.

where the world begins and godly spirituality ends. Complications arise when churches combine with major coffee houses and restaurants and effectively overshadow the reasons worshipers gather in the first place. God calls us to new heights and wants to draw close to us. Stephen Miller says that, “God called Isaiah into His presence and revealed His glory to him! Isaiah probably didn’t expect that this would happen, as this king of theophany was rare, even for a prophet. Yet God was there, jolting Isaiah out of his worship-as-usual routine with a life-changing opportunity to see Him high and lifted up.”⁶ We must move out of our regular routines and find time to become enthralled with a relationship with God.

Statement of the Problem

Spiritual formations have slipped through the cracks for many churches from the 1950’s forward into the turn of the twenty-first century. Many churches have chosen to attract believers by promoting consumer desires instead of the essentials in spiritual development. This spiritual development has increasingly become shallow across the church universal. One of the causes of this spiritual immaturity arises from the large evangelistic crusades of the 1960’s and 1970’s. These crusades brought about much awareness about Jesus and many were brought to salvation through them. After people were converted, the Billy Graham crusade attempted to follow up with these individuals on a topical level to jump start their walk with Christ, but then left it up to the local church to continue the development of these young Christians. Unfortunately, the church failed to undergird these efforts thus creating Christians that did not have a solid spiritual foundation. Although some new believers continued to stay strong, others fell away.

⁶ Stephen Miller, *Worship Leaders: We are not Rock Stars*, (Chicago: Moody Press), 2013, 5.

The emphasis placed on spiritual development has waned, thus creating musicians who are unaware of their spiritual needs as worship leaders. Mark 12:30 reminds Christians to, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” This command is essential and is the cornerstone for a relationship with Jesus for all followers. To follow this command, it is essential that spiritual development occur through the spiritual disciplines. These spiritual disciplines allow the follower of Christ to become more intimate with God.

Active participation allows the worshiper to enter the presence of God. Modern worship ministry, however, has begun to be more of a performance-based entity that attempts to please the audience through spectatorship instead of a vehicle to promote active participation in worship. Without active participation worshippers become complacent and lack spiritual direction in worship. Without a spiritual connection the average worship leader is unable to focus on the presence of God. The worship leader must rely on their performance and talent to convey worship leadership to the congregation. In an article on connecting talent and liturgy, Michael J. Joncas states,

“The mysterious interplay of our natural talents and limitations being elevated and transformed by divine grace might be illustrated by the performances of Olympic athletes. These humans are blessed with certain natural talents and limitations; through long training and hard work they have cooperated in bringing these talents to their highest peak; yet what we will witness in their competition are primarily acts of beauty, utterly ‘graceful’ athleticism. Think of the breathtaking symmetry of a gymnast or the disciplined power of a swimmer. Disciples likewise put their talents and limitations at the service of the Spirit: Through wise counsel and long experience they learn the unique roles God has called them to play in his furtherance of the Kingdom, so what we hope by the end of our earthly lives is that the beautiful, graceful way of Jesus has become our way of living in the world.”⁷

⁷ Michael J. Joncas, “Disciples at Worship: Connecting Liturgy and Life”, *Pastoral Music* 37, (Nov 2012): 54.

Spiritual development teaches the individual to stay true to the main purpose of humankind; to love God completely through an intimate relationship with Him and to use their given talents for the pleasure of God furthering His Kingdom. Paul Richardson reminds us that, “It is precisely this shifting of attention from ourselves to God that best forms us, for it reorients our relationships: to God, to other believers, and to the world.”⁸ This intimate relationship can only be encouraged through the development of spiritual disciplines within the life of the worship leader. These disciplines allow the believer to become more in tune with their spiritual being. The spiritual disciplines are those practices found in scripture that provide a foundation for the growth of a relationship with God so that a deeper understanding of God may be achieved. All disciplines point toward the culmination of worship where they reach their peak. According to Lyndel Vaught, “Every day, Jesus withdrew from those around him to spend time in a dialogue of prayer with God the Father. Those encounters were times of daily personal worship. When He rejoined His disciples to teach, preach and minister, all of His actions, thoughts, feelings were guided and directed by His sustaining relationship with the Uncreated One through daily personal worship.”⁹ Personal relationship through the spiritual disciplines is the answer for strong worship leadership in the church.

John 4:23 states, “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him.” What does it mean to worship God in spirit and in truth? What does it mean to be a true worshiper? Many do not understand the act of worship and how to actively participate in it. By worshipping in the spirit, we obtain a spiritual sustenance that goes beyond words; this sustenance is obtained

⁸ Paul Richardson, “Spiritual Formation in Corporate Worship,” *Review and Expositor* 96, (1999): 519.

⁹ Lyndel Vaught, “Worship Models and Music in Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging* 22, (2010): 105.

during the act of worship. A true worshipper does not depend on the physical realm to provide nourishment but looks to the spirit and the truth of God. Therefore, a true worshipper relies on the Word and Spirit of God. The problem culminates when those responsible for worship no longer teach the act of worship to their congregants but simply copy the world and provide entertainment. Matt Boswell states,

One of the greatest needs of the modern church is theologically driven worship leaders. The church is starving for worship leaders who will teach them to sing about the great gospel of Christ in all its richness. This need for theologically driven worship leaders exists in large part because many believe that worship leadership and theological aptitude are mutually exclusive. Theology, they believe, is the occupation of pastors and professors, while worship is the business of church musicians and songwriters. So, pastors and professors teach the truth and the worship leaders lead the singing. And because of this, our churches are limping along with people who do not understand that the greatest truths of the gospel have always been designed to cause the greatest praise.¹⁰

In the recent decade, disconnection from the spiritual vitality of corporate worship has led many to fill their life with other activities on Sundays.

Due to the deficiency of spiritual disciplines, the believer's spiritual life has become shallow. One document dating back to the first century contains the teaching of the apostles. This document, called *The Didache*, provides a glimpse into the spiritual work of the apostles shortly following Jesus ascension into heaven. It states, "There are two paths, one of life and one of death, and the difference is great between the two paths. Now the path of life is this – first, thou shalt love the God who made thee, thy neighbor as thyself, and all things that thou wouldest not should be done unto thee, do not thou unto another."¹¹ The essence of this teaching is that the love of God must be at the center of life. Loving God and one's neighbor is crucial in the

¹⁰ Matt Boswell, *Doxology and Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), Kindle, Location 142.

¹¹ Charles H. Hoole. *The Didache*. (Lexington KY, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), 16.

development of all spiritual areas within the Christian life. Loving God and others become the foundation on which worship is built. Love becomes the foundation for a personal relationship with God, which in turn becomes the foundation for worship.

When a believer experiences passionate, life giving worship, it can be frightening. The fact that passions arise in worship and can lead to a call from God that could move the person out of his or her comfort zone can be daunting. In observing many encounters with God throughout the scriptures, most encounters show God as awe-inspiring; the person rarely remains the same and the presence of God changes their lives forever. When the presence of God is experienced, a change occurs without exception. Mark Labberton expresses that, “Worship names what matters most: the way human beings are created to reflect God’s glory by embodying God’s character in lives that seek righteousness and do justice. Such comprehensive worship redefines all we call ordinary. Worship turns out to be the dangerous act of waking up to God and to the purposes of God in the world, and then living lives that actually show it.”¹² If we truly experience God, then God’s purpose will become our purposes. Waking up to God means taking control of our spiritual development and learning the difference between spectator, or entertainer, and active participant in worship.

Purpose of the Study

From the beginning of creation, there has been instilled in the human heart the act of worship. Whether the object of worship is work, beauty, family, or money, the human heart has always become infatuated with the worship of another. For the human heart that has accepted Jesus, the yearning of worship must be directed to the one who is Creator. Often this yearning

¹² Mark Labberton. *The Dangerous Act of Worship*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 13.

gets displaced with the enticing objects of this world. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, ““No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” Whether it is wealth or the love of earthly objects, it is impossible for believers to be in love with earthly things concurrent with spiritual matters. When talking with the Samaritan woman, Jesus taught her that many seek God but in the wrong way. God looks at the heart not what it is on the outside. The human heart seeks worship but only God knows how to direct the heart toward something greater. He directs them toward Himself. The culmination of spiritual development ends in true worship to God.

During the time of the early church, early Christians relied on the instructions given by Jesus and passed down orally through the disciples. Paul, Timothy and others wrote these instructions and gave further instruction on the basics of the Christian life. The history behind the spiritual development of the Christian comes from Israel’s heritage of worship to God throughout the Old Testament. Many scriptures from both the Old and New Testaments provide examples of worship with spiritual maturity. The following scriptures capture the maturity of the spiritual life through the lives of those in the Bible that culminate in worship.

Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.” (Genesis 22:5)

And He said, “Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.” (Exodus 3:12)

So, the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped. (Exodus 4:31)

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come before Him; Worship the Lord in holy array. (1 Chronicles 16:29)

Then Ezra blessed the Lord the great God. And all the people answered, “Amen, amen!” while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. (Nehemiah 8:6)

While they stood in their place, they read from the book of the law of the Lord their God for a fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the Lord their God. (Nehemiah 9:3)

For they performed the worship of their God and the service of purification, together with the singers and the gatekeepers in accordance with the command of David and of his son Solomon. (Nehemiah 12:45)

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will worship before You. (Psalm 22:27)

Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. (Psalm 95:6)

Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His holy hill, for holy is the Lord our God. (Psalm 99:9)

Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people, the Father seeks to be His worshipers. (John 4:21-23)

[Dedicated Service] Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Romans 12:1)

As the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So, they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!” [Good Order in Worship] What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up. (1 Corinthians 14:25-26)

And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, “And let all the angels of God worship Him.” (Hebrews 1:6)

By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. (Hebrews 11:21)

And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God. (Revelation 7:11)

These scriptures provide a background of references to worship where people either were commanded to worship God, or they spontaneously fell and worshipped because of a direct encounter with God. The commandment to worship God is found in the Bible from the beginning of time to the end - existing with Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel all the way forward to Revelation; in the final times all people bow down to worship Him. Andrew Faiz notes that worship draws us near to God privately even while we are in a corporate setting. He observes that, “This other worship for all of us in the pews, each individually each in their own way, each with different concerns and weights, is a private matter, our personal conversation with God.”¹³ God speaks to His people personally in private conversation and as a people corporately. Once a believer truly encounters God through corporate or private conversation, they are changed forever. While it is commanded strongly to worship God, few people take the time to spiritually develop their private time with God to deepen the relationship they have with God. Only if believers have experienced God through the spiritual disciplines can they expect to find Him in the corporate worship experience. The early church was encouraged consistently to worship God in purity. Today, people have lost interest in worship due to the malformation of their spiritual development. If worship leaders are not in tune with God’s presence, it is not surprising that corporate worship today appears frivolous.

God created man in His own image and gave him the gift of free will, therefore humans were given the choice to worship God. In giving them free will, the worship He receives is pure;

¹³ Andrew Faiz, “Personal Conversations: Worship is often a very Private Experience” *Presbyterian Record* (November 2013): 6.

by proclaiming everything as good, we see that God gained pleasure from His creation; He was pleased with what He has made. In Genesis 1:27-31 we find,

“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the [an] surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food”; and it was so. God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”

While God loves worship, it is not for Him alone, worship is advantageous to the believer as well. Worship provides a place to place one’s beliefs; a place that is larger than the earth and controls every part of the world. Fully worshipping God provides a place of strength, peace and rest.

Jesus knew what God desired in worship and Jesus provides an answer about the greatest commandment, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, ‘you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” These two commandments give the theological foundation for the existence of the followers of Jesus Christ. It explains that loving God is foremost in our relationship with God. To love someone, you must know that person, enjoy their presence and give time and effort to the relationship. Spiritual growth through the disciplines of the Christian life provide the foundation needed to gain strength and depth within the relationship with God, our families, our friends at church, and our neighbors throughout our community and the entire world.

Those who are worship leaders have a high calling and must be adamant on pursuing their relationship with God in their own private closet. The purpose of this study is to encourage, provide necessary tools and walk the worship team leaders of Monte Vista Baptist Church to a deeper and more intimate walk with Christ. I intend to provide the worship team leaders of Monte Vista Baptist the skills to create their own personal daily worship time to bring about spiritual transformation that will enhance their leadership in corporate worship.

Three Research Questions

The approach in obtaining the information needed to answer some probing questions must be far-reaching and truthful. Questions must be constructed that are refined and pointed, to obtain answers that will further these team leaders in their spiritual development. There are three questions that will be answered within the pages of this project.

First, what common factors of personal worship directly influence the quality of corporate worship to team leaders? This question will help determine if common factors provide spiritual formation that intensifies the experience for the worship team member.

Second, does personal worship through the spiritual disciplines ignite passion in leaders that otherwise lead for other reasons? If these worship team leaders lead for other reasons, will spiritual development help change their mindset?

Third, does it make a difference in the overall quality of corporate worship leadership, if the leaders are spiritually in-tune with the Holy Spirit? Does it make a difference within the leaders without affecting corporate worship?

These questions provide basic reason to why a study of this type is important. A teaching manual on the spiritual disciplines for spiritual transformation will be created. This guide will

explain the various techniques used to help participants to understand the numerous levels of personal worship. This will show that the amount of spiritual maturity is directly correlated to the depth of worship one leads or experiences.

Significance of the Study

The link between spiritual maturity and true worship are indispensable when experiencing a depth of worship that encourages growth between the believer and God. Most Christians are not engaged in worship because they are spiritually deficient. Boredom has overtaken their lives and they are seeking an answer. Christians have taken the characteristics from the world and incorporated it into worship to entertain those who attend and provide an atmosphere that will make the church successful. Does God listen to our worship for perfection, or does He look to the heart first? It is not to say that God does not want us to bring our best, but the obsession on technical perfection, (not spiritual excellence), in the church takes away from the main point of adoring and worshipping the Creator who made his creation to have an intimate relationship with Him.

Worship team leaders are quickly falling in love with the musical element instead of the creator who is being worshipped. Upon analyzing ways that the staff can help the congregation; it is concluded that worship team leaders at Monte Vista Baptist have moved away from connecting their spiritual development in private with their corporate offerings in worship. The results are leaders that become burned out, and lack the depth needed to lead effectively. In providing an avenue to create or enhance their personal devotion and worship time, the hope is the worship team leaders will experience a deeper meaning of worship thus transforming attitudes toward worship.

Definition of Terms

This project attempts to provide direction in how worship team leaders at Monte Vista Baptist Church come to the throne of God. The term, **Worship Team Leaders**, used in this document will always refer to the worship team leaders of Monte Vista Baptist Church. Additionally, terms such as **spiritual formation** or **disciplines** will refer to the active participation of a private routine worship time with God and His Son Jesus to foster the relationship that is the privilege of a child of God. Worship team leaders of Monte Vista Baptist will include leaders of the worship band, audio team, media team, praise team, drama team, children choir leaders, youth choir leaders and sanctuary choir. The term **private worship** will indicate the act of personal worship time through the disciplines of the believer whereas **corporate worship** will indicate the gathering of believers together in one setting to worship God.

Assumptions

There are a few factors that this writer will assume in the writing of this paper. All worship team leaders are from Monte Vista Baptist. Each worship team member is assumed to be a believer in Christ for at least one year and interested in furthering their spiritual formation to achieve greater depth in their worship leading. Additionally, basic knowledge of the Bible is assumed in each of the worship team members (e.g. birth of Christ, death and resurrection of Christ). While a theology of worship will be part of the curriculum in this project, basic knowledge of salvation should be assumed from the worship team leaders.

Limitations

What makes God so great is the degree of creativity He exudes within His creation apparent everywhere. Consider the differences in animals, plant life, lands, molecules, culture, and people throughout the world. There is no exception to this rule when it comes to individual humans. Each person is created with diverse talents as well as varied tastes. It is this creativity that attracts believers to this God of wonders - an attraction that includes an encounter with a God that is not only all powerful, but gentle and kind. Distinctions found in each individual require ministers to recognize that different people have distinct spiritual needs. These needs also occur in worship and should be determined, categorized, and ordered to determine which part of spiritual development helps to obtain a broader view of worship and deeper love of God. Due to personality differences, questions on a pre-test for this project will be administered to obtain a snapshot of where each worship team leader is spiritually. Personality differences are one of the challenges that will be considered when teaching this curriculum to these leaders encouraging the spiritual disciplines that will enhance their view and walk with God.

Society, family upbringing and surrounding culture have a great deal of impact on spiritual formation on worship leaders. These issues will be examined as spiritual development takes place. While it is desirable to become all things to all people, it is unrealistic and impossible to accept that role. All social and cultural pressures take their toll on worship leaders as much as they do in entire churches and the larger local community. Realizing these types of pressures while creating the tools needed for spiritual development will be advantageous to worship leaders as they seek a deeper walk with the Lord.

Chapter 2

RESOURCES DEFENSE

Hearing the Word of God

In this section the members of Monte Vista Baptist Church are called upon to use extraordinary disciplines of the Spirit to dig further into the Word of God as a prelude to Worship. Hearing, meditating and activating the Word of God within the life of the Christian is the goal for these worship leaders. As we consider the resources needed to understand three of the Spirit's disciplines, we must begin with examples of the disciplines as taught by those saints who have studied and taught these for centuries.

Bible Study

The importance of Bible study cannot be over emphasized in the life of the believer. The Bible provides several reasons why this book is more than a historical account, but it provides a companion to the believer to help on life's journey. Therefore, in Bible study, the most logical book to use is the Bible. The Bible contains the story of God from the beginning of creation through the creation of the Church in the first century. There are several scriptures that emphasize the reading of the Bible as important to the illumination of the path to follow God, as highlighted in Psalm 119:105 -"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." These scriptures speak of God's word and its importance (Matthew 13:22-24 – Parable of the Seed; I John 2:5 – Love of God's Word; I John 2:14 – God's Word must reside in the believer;)

Robert F. Lay has compiled primary resources from several centuries that allow for a peak on the importance of scripture to those who started the church. In this volume, he mentions the work of Justin Martyr that emphasizes that the prophets

“both saw and announced the truth to men, neither reverencing nor fearing any man, not influenced by a desire for glory, but speaking those things alone which they saw and which they heard, being filled with the Holy Spirit. Their writings are still extant, and he who has read them is very much helped in his knowledge of the beginning and end of all things-those matters the philosophers ought to know, if they would believe. For the prophets did not use (philosophical) demonstration in their writings, but were witnesses to the truth superseding all demonstration, and worthy of belief.”¹⁴

Here the prophets from the Word of God are lifted up as important to a witness of who Jesus is and how he came to be.

Another primary source, *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas A. Kempis, refers to many aspects of the Christian disciplines even though the disciplines are not mentioned specifically, - for example, one can infer the importance of Bible study in this work. Kempis states that “Of the knowledge of truth, Happy is the man whom Truth by itself doth teach, not by figures and transient words, but as it is in itself.”¹⁵ The truth of God is the single aspect of life that provides guidance to the mysteries that life has to offer. This book provides in-depth study on the importance of reviewing the scriptures and living the scriptures out in ordinary life.

Saint Augustine in *Confessions* provides this comment, “But the Word, O God, is the fount of eternal life (John 4:14) and does not pass away. A departure from God is checked by your Word, when it is said to us ‘Be not conformed to this world’ (Romans 12:2) so that the ‘earth may produce a living soul’ through the fount of life. By your word through your evangelists the soul achieves self-control by modelling itself on the imitators of your Christ.”¹⁶ This resource affirms that the Bible as the Word of God is the single most trusted resource that

¹⁴ Justin Martyr, “Dialogue with Trypho” in *Readings In Historical Theology: Primary Sources of the Christian Faith*, ed. Robert F. Lay, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2009), 64.

¹⁵ Thomas A. Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, ed. Rev. William Benham, (Hollywood, FL: Simon & Brown, 2016), 2.

¹⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 291

the Christian have to rely on when expanding their knowledge of God and bringing their spirit closer to His Spirit.

From the resource, “The Authority and Credibility of Scripture” by John Calvin, we find this statement: “As we shall soon see that all the books of the sacred Scripture very far excel all other writings. If we read it with pure eyes and sound minds, we shall immediately perceive the majesty of God, which will subdue our audacious contradictions and compel us to obey Him.”¹⁷ John Calvin’s defense of scripture as the only way to experience God provides the foundation that the Word of God is important to the life of the individual Christian. Furthermore, there is no chance of spiritual transformation without the regular intake of scripture.

Lectio Divina

The study of scripture is one of the most challenging yet rewarding disciplines one can undertake when seeking to grow spiritually and become more like our God. *Lectio Divina* is one discipline that can bring the study of scripture into a brighter light of understanding. There are many books that talk about the study of scripture and the approach one can take to provide an optimum return on the investment in studying the scriptures. *Lectio Divina* is one of those disciplines.

In obtaining resources that explain the details of *Lectio Divina* one must search for the meaning of this discipline in the minds of the great masters. One such person is Saint Ignatius and the spiritual exercises he created, “St Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) had an outlook on God, the created universe, and the role of human beings within it that led him to inspire many

¹⁷ John Calvin, “The Authority and Credibility of Scripture” in *Christian Apologetics: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, eds. Khaldoun A. Sweis, Chad V. Meister, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 278.

others to be seriously concerned with their spiritual growth and apostolic zeal.”¹⁸ While Saint Ignatius does not specifically address the term *Lectio Divina*, there are many aspects of his writings that go hand in hand with properly applying this meditation technique for deeper Bible study and reflection.

Another valuable resource in this area is Adele Calhoun’s book on the disciplines. This book details the many types of disciplines in the art of spiritual matters so that Christians may become better acquainted with the Spirit of God learning more about God’s character and plan. Calhoun states, “*Lectio Divina*’ or hearing of Scripture requires an open, reflective, listening posture alert to the voice of God. This type of reading is aimed more at growing a relationship with God than gathering information about God.”¹⁹

Donald Whitney’s resource on the disciplines is invaluable when placed alongside the other books on spiritual disciplines. He states,

The kind of meditation encouraged in the Bible differs from other kinds of meditation in several ways. While some advocate a kind of meditation in which you do your best to empty your mind, Christian meditation involves filling your mind with God and truth. For some, meditation is an attempt to achieve complete mental passivity, but biblical meditation requires constructive mental activity. Worldly meditation employs visualization techniques intended to “create your own reality.” And while Christian history has always had a place for the sanctified use of our God-given imagination in meditation, imagination is our servant to help us meditate on things that are true (Philippians 4:8). Furthermore, instead of “creating our own reality” through visualization, we link meditation with prayer to God and responsible, Spirit-filled human action to effect changes.²⁰

The information in this volume outlines several topics on disciplines that help to expand the specific element of *Lectio Divina*.

¹⁸ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, ed. George E. Ganss, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1992), 1.

¹⁹ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 187.

²⁰ Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), 47.

Jan Johnson's book, *Meeting God in Scripture: A Hands-on Guide to Lectio Divina*, is a undeniable resource for learning the art of this discipline. She has compiled forty guided meditations that walk you through the art of *Lectio Divina*. In using this book, you can get a fresh view of scripture and the application of this discipline in the Christian's spiritual involvement with scripture. Each section expands on the elements *lectio, meditation, oratio, and contemplatio*.

Meditation

In Clement's First Letter, we find several references to the art of meditation and reflection when connecting our spirit to the Holy Spirit. In this letter he states, "Let us note what is good, what is pleasing and acceptable to Him who made us. Let us fix our eyes on the blood of Christ and let us realize how precious it is to his Father; since it was poured out for our salvation and brought the grace of repentance to the whole world."²¹ The inference of meditation is included in the first statement, "Let us note what is good, what is pleasing and acceptable to Him who made us."²² This statement can only come to pass if one takes meditation seriously. This resource provides many statements that refer to knowing Christ Jesus in an intimate nature through meditating on his Word and Life.

Pre-Nicene theology provides insight to meditation in the spirit and provides clear instruction in all areas of the spiritual life. J.N.D. Kelly states that:

His most frequent and characteristic thought is that Christ is the teacher Who endows men with true knowledge, leading them to a love exempt from desires and a righteousness whose prime love is contemplation. He is their guide at the different levels of life, 'instructing the gnostic by mysteries, the believer by good

²¹Clement, "First Letter", in *Early Christian Fathers*, ed. Cyril C. Richardson, (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 47.

²² Ibid, 47.

hopes, and the hard-hearted by corrective chastisement'. It is as teacher that He is 'the all-healing physician of mankind', Who bestows immortality as well as knowledge.²³

This resource provides knowledge of the levels of meditation that help the follower of Christ to plunge into the various levels of spirituality and apply it to their own walk.

Augustine, in *Confessions*, provides a glance at his life through the struggles he dealt with in his Christian walk. In this book, one can walk the path he journeyed and see the steps he took to achieve spiritual enlightenment. Augustine reflects on his relationship with Christ,

My God, give me yourself, restore yourself to me. See, I love you, and if it is too little, let me love you more strongly. I can conceive no measure by which to know how far my love falls short of that which is enough to make my life run to your embraces, and not to turn away until it lies hidden 'in the secret place of your presence' (Ps. 30:21) This alone I know; without you it is evil for me, not only in external things but within my being, and all my abundance which is other than my God is mere indigence.²⁴

We discover through this statement that time spent in pursuing the interests of God is a gift that brings returns in the Christian walk through joy and peace. This resource provides an in-depth structure in the life of Saint Augustine.

Communing with the Spirit of God

It is imperative when communing with the Spirit of God that we focus on specific elements that draw us to His Spirit. As we consider the type of resources that are needed to dig deep into the spiritual realms and connect with the Triune God, the following sources are a sampling of what will be offered to substantiate the need for these disciplines for the Christian.

²³ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers) 1978, 54.

²⁴ Saint Augustine, 278.

Centering Prayer

While Centering Prayer is a specific way to prayer, we find in this resource some thoughts on prayer by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. His thoughts on prayer mirror that of Centering Prayer and provide perception into the way a Christian should pray. Bonhoeffer says, “All Christian prayer is directed to God through a Mediator, and not even prayer affords direct access to the Father. Only through Jesus Christ can we find the Father in prayer.”²⁵ Therefore prayer must be done through Jesus Christ. When we attempt to access the Father in Centering Prayer, the words we breathe must be done through the life of Jesus Christ. In addition, he states,

“We pray to God because we believe in him through Jesus Christ; that is to say, our prayer can never be an entreaty to God, for we have no need to come before him in that way. We are privileged to know that he knows our needs before we ask him. That is what gives Christian prayer its boundless confidence and its joyous certainty. It matters little what form of prayer we adopt or how many words we use, what matters is the faith which lays hold on God and touches the heart of the Father who knew us long before we came to him.”²⁶

The type of prayer we use to speak to the Father is not the issue but making time to pray and making a connection with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as the important part of the task. This task was accomplished by Bonhoeffer when he was imprisoned, his reflections on his prayer life become a valuable source on prayer. Therefore, centering prayer focuses on the Trinity as the source of inspiration.

In the *First Epistle of Clement* it is emphasized that prayer is the option that provides Christians with strength from the Holy Spirit. Centering Prayer focuses on the personhood of the Trinity while allowing the individual to access the strength of the Trinity in daily struggles. This resource shows the many times Clement teaches about prayer in his letters and gives the

²⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, (New York: SCM Press Ltd, 1995), 162-163.

²⁶ Ibid. 163.

individual access through the power of the Holy Spirit. Clement's prayer states, "Direct their plans, O Lord in accord with 'what is good and pleasing to you,' so that they may administer the authority you have given them, with peace, considerateness, and reverence, and so win your mercy."²⁷ Interwoven with scripture he provides examples of prayers that are strong, and an acceptable way to focus on God through the process of centering prayer around the character of God.

Anselm, a teacher and spiritual mentor, in his *Proslogion* provides a resource of prayer that gives the average Christian guidance in using centering prayer as a place to commune with the Spirit of God. Anselm begins in Chapter 1, "Come now, busy bee, forget your busyness for a bit, silence your hurtful thoughts; Put away your cares, pack-off your troubles; Allow time for God and rest in Him."²⁸ His thoughts emphasize the importance of individual time with God as a way to silence the rush of the world and commune with his Spirit. The *Proslogion* contains prayers that are directed to God to help direct the mind to stay on task by centering one's thoughts around the personhood of the Trinity.

Fasting

Fasting is a form of prayer that may help in communing with the Spirit of God, Thomas Kempis, in *The Imitation of Christ* provides clarity on the importance of removing obstacles that may provide resistance in the spirit of one seeking to connect with God. He states, "Behold, food and drink and clothing, and all the other needs appertaining to the support of the body, are

²⁷ Clement, 72.

²⁸ Anselm, "Proslogion," in *Readings in Historical Theology: Primary Sources of the Christian Faith*, ed. Robert F. Lay, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2009), 95.

burdensome to the devout spirit. Grant that I may use such things with moderation, and that I be not entangled with inordinate affection for them.”²⁹ This source provides several steps in removing these obstacles in order to use fasting as a conduit to hear the spirit clearly. Irenaeus speaks about letting go of things that binds one to the earth so that one may be closer to the Spirit of God. In “The Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching” he instructs:

Rather loose unrighteous bonds, dissolve wrong covenants, free the oppressed and avoid every sinful contract. Give your bread to the hungry and bring the homeless poor under your roof; if you see him naked, clothe him; and do not hide yourself from your own flesh. Then will your light break forth as the morning and you will rise up quickly, and your righteousness will go before you and the glory of God will cover. Then You will cry out and the Lord will hear you while you are still speaking.

While fasting is not directly addressed in this specific passage, the quote from this source asserts that removing such distractions allows our spirits to be better in tune with God granting righteousness to shine through. Further in this treaty, he suggests that Christians must “Subdue the flesh, so far as your health permits, by fasting and abstinence from food and drink.”³⁰

Donald Whitney’s resource on the disciplines of the Holy Spirit speaks on the definition of fasting. Here he asserts that “A biblical definition of fasting is a Christian’s voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes.”³¹ This resource provides adequate avenues in which to pursue the discipline of fasting in a healthy manner that allows the spirit to strengthen with the Spirit of God.

²⁹ Kempis, 55.

³⁰ Irenaeus, "The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching." In *Readings in Historical Theology: Primary Sources of the Christian Faith*, by Robert F. Lay, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications), 2009, 167.

³¹ Whitney, 160.

Sabbath

A key resource that speaks about a vast range of spiritual disciplines is Adele Calhoun's, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, this source is invaluable in researching the different types of disciplines and Biblical support behind them. Calhoun's states that the, "Sabbath is God's gift of repetitive and regular rest. It is given for our delight and communion with God. Time for being in the midst of a life of doing particularly characterizes the sabbath."³² This source expounds the idea of a Sabbath and how to include it in one's life. Additionally, she states, "Sabbath is not dependent upon our readiness to stop. We do not stop when we are finished. We do not stop when we complete our phone calls, finish our project, get through this stack of messages, or get out this report that is due tomorrow. We stop because it is time to stop."³³

Ignatius, "Letter to the Magnesians" states how the sabbath became distant after some time choosing to celebrate the Lord's day on which he rose from dead. He states:,

If, therefore, those who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death-whom some deny, by which mystery we have obtained faith, and therefore endure, that we may be found the disciples of Jesus Christ, our only Master – how shall we be able to live apart from Him, whose disciples the prophets themselves in the Spirit did wait for Him as their Teacher? And therefore, He whom they rightly waited for, being come, raised them from the dead.³⁴

This resource provides a foundation on how the Old Testament commandment of the Sabbath transformed into the discipline-practice of observing the Lord's Day – a frame in which the people of God came to worship and use as a day of rest.

³² Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 42.

³³ Ibid, 42.

³⁴ Ignatius, "Letter to the Magnesians", in *Readings in Historical Theology: Primary Sources of the Christian Faith*, ed. Robert F. Lay, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2009), 121.

Elector Frederick III in the “Heidelberg Catechism” gives reason to continue the Sabbath discipline as a way of life that allows our life to be complete in the Lord. He states, “First that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained; and that I, especially on the Sabbath, that is, on the day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God to hear his word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord, and contribute to the relief of the poor. Secondly, that all the days of my life I cease from my evil works, and yield myself to the Lord, to work by his Holy Spirit in me: and thus, begin in this life the eternal Sabbath.”³⁵ This source maintains that the Sabbath should not be abandoned but strengthened in the life of the believer.

Celebrating in Worship

There are several disciplines that give clarity to the private and corporate worship experience. These disciplines allow growth to take place that free us from our binds to this world and open the Christian experience in worship to a deeper level. The following sources are representative of what is available to strengthen the Christian in their worship experience and walk with Jesus Christ.

Confession

Confession is one element that has been forgotten over the course of decades of corporate worship. One of the main points of Clement’s “First Letter” states, “Let us, then ask pardon for our failings and for whatever we have done through the prompting of the adversary.”³⁶ This

³⁵ Irenaeus. "The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching." In *Readings in Historical Theology Primary Sources of the Christian Faith*, by Robert F. Lay, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications), 2009. 68.

³⁶ Clement, 54.

primary source offers clarity for the Christian in the importance of confession before Christ. It further affirms reasons confessions are important in clearing the path for true worship.

Paul Evens states in the *Moody Handbook of Theology* that, “[The Holy Spirit] convicts the world (John 16:8-11) The of convicting (Gk. *Elegxei*) is the work of a prosecuting attorney whereby He seeks to convince someone of something. The Holy Spirit acts as a divine Jesus. He also convinces the world of the righteousness of Christ because of His resurrection and ascension; and He convinces the world of judgment because Satan was judged at the cross.”³⁷ God allows this conviction so that we have connection that brings us closer to being like the mind of Christ. This source expands further on the work of the Holy Spirit and the role our confessions have in our spiritual life.

Additionally, the Dead Sea scrolls expound on the role of the Spirit in salvation, “For it is through the spirit of true counsel concerning the ways of man that all his sins shall be expiated that he may contemplate the light of life. He shall be cleansed from all his sins by the spirit of holiness uniting him to His truth, and his iniquity shall be expiated by the spirit of uprightness and humility. (Rules of the Community 3:6-8)”³⁸ This source provides evidence that conviction by the Holy Spirit provides the Christian with reflection that helps in working out salvation. Confession provides a clear conscience that perpetuates the rising of righteousness in the Christian life.

³⁷ Paul Evens, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 144.

³⁸ Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 4th ed. (New York/Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1995), 263.

Gratitude

According to Thomas Kempis, Humankind does not do well in expressing gratitude, “Of gratitude for the Grace of God...God doeth well in giving us the grace of comfort, but man doeth ill in not immediately giving God thanks thereof.”³⁹ This resource provides an abundance of information about the transformation and imitation of Christ available to the Christian.

Ignatius speaks to the Ephesians in a letter for them to, “Do your [their] best, then, to meet more often to give thanks and glory to God. When you meet frequently, the powers of Satan are confounded, and in the face of your corporate faith his maleficence crumbles. Nothing can better state of peaceful accord, from which every trace of spiritual or earthly hostility has been banished.”⁴⁰ Ignatius presents evidence that gratitude for the Christian is not to be taken lightly. He further states that gratitude to God is a form of worship and brings us straight into the presence of God.

Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest* gives his definition of gratitude: “Gratitude is a loving and thankful response toward God for his presence with us and within this world. Though “blessings” can move us into gratitude, it is not at the root of a thankful heart. Delight in God and his good will is the heartbeat of thankfulness.”⁴¹ This source has an entire section referencing gratitude as an important element of the Christian life and how important it is in the worship of God.

Calhoun in her book on the disciplines states, “We, like Jesus, have choices about how to respond to what life dishes up. We each have the power to interpret the facts of our lives. We

³⁹ Kempis, 29.

⁴⁰ Ignatius, 121.

⁴¹ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1963), 7/29.

make the choices that turn us into bitter or grateful people. Carl Jung discovered (and popularized) this statement among the Latin writings of erasmus: *vocatus atque non vocatus deus aderit*. Gratitude is rooted in this reality that ‘bidden or unbidden, God is present.’⁴² This source provides an exhaustive look at the disciplines and is a most important resource that gives Biblical foundations on the importance of Gratitude and the different ways to give thanks properly to God.

Celebration

Clement’s first letter provides insight to the element of Celebration in worship as a discipline. He states, “We must, then, approach him with our souls holy, lifting up pure and undefiled hands to him, loving our King and compassionate Father, who has made us his chosen portion.”⁴³ Clement’s letter further provides evidence that the celebration of worship to the Father is something that helps Christians as well as gives honor and glory to the Father.

Adele Calhoun states that “Celebrating God does not depend on perfect circumstances or happy feelings. Even in prison Paul and Silas found something to sing about (Acts 16).”⁴⁴ This resource offers understanding on celebrating God and the many Biblical passages that are provided in the Bible on Celebration. Celebration of God does not depend on circumstances but on a willing heart.

A primary source, Ignatius’ letter to the Ephesians, contains a vast array of content on how we are to use the disciplines of the Spirit in our lives. Here he states that we should, “Pray,

⁴² Calhoun, 32.

⁴³Clement, “Clement’s First Letter” in *Early Christian Fathers*, ed. Cyril C. Richardson (New York: TouchStone, 1996), 57.

⁴⁴ Calhoun, 29.

then, come and join this choir, every one of you; let there be a whole symphony of minds in concert take the tone all together from God, and sing aloud to the Father with one voice through Jesus Christ, so that He may hear you and know by your good works that you are indeed members of His Son's Body. A complete united front will help to keep you in constant communion with God."⁴⁵ Ignatius states that celebration to God helps Christians stay united in the fight for the Kingdom of God. This source encourages the connection of the Christians' spirit with the Spirit of God through worship.

Living in the Kingdom of God

There are many areas in the Kingdom of God that need attention as the believer in Christ begins their journey toward becoming like the Savior. It is imperative to use the following Disciplines in a manner that provides peace when living within the Kingdom of God. These Spiritual Disciplines are invaluable to worship leaders.

Forgiveness

Calhoun's definition of forgiveness provides a different angle that most do not consider. She states that, "True forgiveness is more than a high ideal. It is a costly, heartrending process that refuses to ignore or minimize wrongdoing. It places blames. It condemns the wrong. But it also gives the wrongdoer a gift. Forgiveness separate wrongdoers from their wrong by refusing to label them as *all bad*. It refuses to add this one injustice to the injustice done to them."⁴⁶ This source provides a wide variety of definitions of the Spiritual disciplines of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁵ Ignatius, 62.

⁴⁶ Calhoun, 213.

In Miroslav Volf's *The End of Memory: Remember in a Violent World*, this book provides reasoning explains why some people are easier to forgive than others. Here we find, "The more severe the wrong doing, the more likely we are to react rather than respond, to act toward wrongdoers the way we feel like acting rather than the way we should act."⁴⁷ Forgiveness in this author's opinion is not always so black and white but must be considered on a level that does not equal a simple forgiveness; forgiveness without explanation is shallow. *The Didache*, known as the teaching of the disciples explains,

There are two paths, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two. Now this is the path of life: first, you shall love the Lord who made you; secondly, your neighbor as yourself; and whatever you do not wish to be done to you, do not do that to others. Here is the instruction: Bless those who curse you and pray for your enemies. Fast for those who persecute you. What good is it if you love only those who love you? Don't the Gentiles do this? But love those that hate you and you will have no enemies.⁴⁸

Highly reflective of the words of Jesus, this source provides a new emphasis about forgiveness from the mouth of the disciples.

Examen

Ruth Haley Barton in her book, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging our Lives for Spiritual Formation*, provides a look at the rhythms of life from a spiritual context. Here she states that "Self-examination is a practice that facilitates spiritual awakening-an awakening to the presence of God as God really is and an awakening to ourselves as we really are."⁴⁹ Further, she continues that until we see ourselves through the eyes of God, we cannot attempt to appreciate the presence

⁴⁷ Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remember in a Violent World*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), Location 78, Kindle.

⁴⁸ "Didache: The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" in *Readings in Historical Theology: Primary Sources of the Christian Faith*, ed. Robert F. Lay, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2009), 26.

⁴⁹ Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 91.

of God and what He has done for humanity. This resource provides teaching on several aspects of the disciplines as it relates to a deepening relationship with God the Son.

Calhoun's resource again affirms that the discipline, *Examen*, "is a foundational aspect of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius Loyola (AD 1491 – 1556). He believed that discernment came out of awareness of how God moved uniquely in each soul. Our insomnia, nervous stomach, difficult interaction, and headache can all take their place as a possible way of more deeply leaning into God."⁵⁰ This book by Calhoun not only argues that *Examen* is an important discipline but provides resources and exercises on application.

Saint Ignatius states his observance that "Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls...To attain this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things, in regard to everything which is left to our free will and is not forbidden...We ought to desire and choose only that which is more conducive to the end for which we are created."⁵¹ Ignatius implies that examination of one's life is necessary to find out what is best for the Christian life. He continues in this resource to describe the spiritual exercises which helped him to connect with the Almighty by removing obstacles.

Service

Dallas Willard in *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, provides a look at the disciplines from the standpoint of why they exist. Their existence is to

⁵⁰ Calhoun, 59.

⁵¹ Saint Ignatius, "Particular Examen" in *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, ed. George E. Ganss, S.J., (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1992), 32.

help Christians work out their salvation. Willards reminds the reader that “In service we engage our goods and strength in the active promotion of the good of others and the causes of God in our world.”⁵² Service helps us to connect with God in tangible ways in the manner of Jesus, God’s Son. This resource explains and helps the average Christian to distance themselves from selfishness and focus on helping their neighbors.

In order to learn the discipline of service, one must know the definition of service. Evans in *The Moody Handbook of Theology* states, “The word *service* (Gk. Diakonia) is a general word for ministering or serving others. The word is used in a broad sense and refers to ministry and service to others in a general way. A sampling of the usages of this word indicates that: Timothy and Erastus served Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:22); Paul served the Jerusalem believers by bringing them a monetary gift (Rom. 15:25); Onesiphorus served at Ephesus (2 Tim. 1:18); Onesimus was helpful to Paul while he was in prison (Philem. 13); the Hebrew believers display acts of kindness (Heb. 6:10). From these and other examples, it appears an important aspect of serving is helping other believers who are in physical need.”⁵³ This source reminds the reader that Christ’ love was shown through his care for the physical needs of those around Him. In removing these barriers, Christians help the average person to be receptive to hearing the truth from the Word of God. In reverse, Christians can stand together with Christ and learn the value of helping others on the earth.

Clement in his *First Epistle* provides insights into the life of the Christian in stating God’s purpose for His children, “He bids us, therefore, to believe on him with all our heart, and

⁵² Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, (New York: HarperOne Publishers, 1988), 182.

⁵³ Evans, 288-289.

not to be slack or negligent in ‘every good deed’”⁵⁴ Clement continues in his *First Epistle* to help Christians understand that salvation without works is dead. As the Christian grows spiritual, it is imperative that service become a part of their spiritual life; service allows the Christian to give back to the kingdom of God.

⁵⁴ Clement, “Clement’s First Letter” in *Early Christian Fathers*, ed. Cyril C. Richardson, (New York: TouchStone, 1996), 59.

Chapter 3

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES THAT INTERSECT WITH WORSHIP

The Word of God

In today's culture, it is often more accepted to quote religious memes than to quote the word of God. The world has moved away from using the bible as the authority by which life is guided. The God of the universe has given instructions for living life His way, but most people choose to ignore this handbook of life. God's word provides understanding about His kingdom therefore giving knowledge that exceeds human thought. If one wants to be more spiritual, then intersecting with the bible daily will provide guidance, strength and care for the long journey through life. Donald Whitney reminds us that "Ours is an undisciplined age. The old disciplines are breaking down.... Above all, the discipline of divine grace is derided as legalism or is entirely unknown to a generation that is largely illiterate in the Scriptures. We need the rugged strength of Christian character that can come only from discipline."⁵⁵ What builds up spiritual character in the average Christian? The answer cannot be covered in one discipline alone but spans along a variety of disciplines used within life to access a relationship with the son of God through which we may access the Father.

Bible Study

As children of God, and co-heirs with Jesus, it is our fundamental duty to investigate the claims of the scriptures, apply them to our lives and deepen the relationship we have with Jesus

⁵⁵Whitney, 1.

Christ. Since the Bible is the Word of God, it is logical to begin with reading and studying it in order to gain an understanding of what this relationship with Jesus is about. As a better understanding of the relationship with God becomes apparent, we are able to ascertain the importance of Bible Study not only in the relationship with Christ, but bible study illuminates the path God sets before us and allows worship to be fruitful by knowing the God that is worshipped.

The Bible does not need a defense; however, it occasionally will provide prompts about itself in relationship to the children of God. Why should we study the Bible? Because it is the best way to know the character of God. The Bible provides blueprints on how to live. Psalm 119:105 (NKJV) states, “Your word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path.” The scriptures provide illumination in the Christian walk as they follow along the path to heaven. Matthew gives the account of the Parable of the Sower to clarify that the Word of God cannot only be heard but must be applied to one’s life. (Matthew 13:22-24, NKJV). In First John 2:4 we find that “He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in Him.” (NKJV). The only way to know the commandments of the Father is to know His Word. First John 2:15 provides truth that those who John thought to be strong knew that “the Word of God abides” in them. In this passage, the Word of God is a defense against the enemy. But how does one know that the Bible is true. In Second Timothy 3:16, the bible defends itself, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” (NIV). Although written by men, God inspired men to write down His words so that humankind would fully know Him. Not only does it correct, but according to Psalm 119:11 the bible provides a protection against sin, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

The scriptures are often described as living, active, and providing an escape from the guises of Satan. Sin separates the Christian from God, therefore Paul Evans states, (speaking on the book of James) “There is an emphasis on the work of Scripture. The Scripture has power to save a soul (1:21); the Scripture reveals man’s sin (1:23-25); the Scripture judges in the present and in the Last Day (2:12).⁵⁶ This protection provides opportunity to learn how to pattern lives after Jesus’ life so worship for Him is presented without interference. Furthermore, he expatiates that, “The writers of scripture were carried along by the Holy Spirit, guaranteeing the inspiration of the books of Scripture. The Spirit’s work in inspiration is analogous to the Father’s work (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16).”⁵⁷ If the Father’s work is equal to the Word of God in the scriptures, then a deduction can be made that studying the word of God is doing the work of God. Not only does the work of God include feeding the poor, housing the homeless and helping the sick, but it includes having a relationship with Jesus so that worship given to God will be richer and fuller.

Psalms 25 expresses the yearning the psalmist feels for knowing God fully. In verses four and five we read, “Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me.” The word “show” in the Hebrew is “hōdîé” which translates to be made known. The psalmist is asking God to make himself known so that he will know God on a deeper level. The psalms are a Hebrew book of worship, if the psalmist declares an interest in knowing God then having a spiritual relationship with God must influence worship. Showing the worshiper God’s ways is not enough, the psalmist asks that he be taught and led into the truth of God. Only God has the knowledge of how life should be lived. By knowing God fully, Christians are able to learn how to navigate life here on earth.

⁵⁶ Evans, 104.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 265.

Lectio Divina

Not only is studying the Bible important to spiritual growth, but meditation upon it helps the Christian spirit to grow. Within the realm of spiritual disciplines, *Lectio Divina*, has long been a tool used to extract meaning from the Holy Scriptures. “*Lectio Divina*” or hearing of Scripture requires an open, reflective, listening posture alert to the voice of God. This type of reading is aimed more at growing a relationship with God with gathering information about God.”⁵⁸ There is much biblical evidence to support the idea of hearing the word of God. Joshua 1:8 (NIV) says, “Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” Also, Psalm 1:1-2 (NIV) declares, “Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord and who meditates on his law day and night.” Hebrews 4:12 (NIV) says that, “the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” These scriptures indicate the importance of God’s word for the children of God. Regular hearing and meditation on its concepts and themes provide an open door to the character of God.

Lectio Divina is a tool that is used to hear the word of God spoken so that its precepts and truth may be absorbed by the human soul. Alan Hauser provides an explanation of the qualities of this tool:

“Lectio Divina. Another, more contemplative method of interpretation practiced during the Middle Ages was *lectio divina*. This is the slow, prayerful, usually vocal reading of biblical texts until they penetrate the inner being of the worshiper. In the Middle Ages, monks daily celebrated the canonical hours, a

⁵⁸ Calhoun, 187.

series of six to eight liturgical services held every few hours throughout the day and the night. Thus, regular recitation of Scripture was interwoven into the everyday life of the monks. This led to a profound understanding of Scripture derived from continual meditation, prayer, and devotion focused on specific scriptural passages. The importance of mystical contemplation and meditation in medieval monasteries caused this form of interpretation to have a powerful impact on the life of medieval Christendom in the West.”⁵⁹

Notice that Hauser declares that through *Lectio Divina* the worshiper is able to extract profound meaning through the use of this tool. The experiences of *Lectio Divina* have life changing effects on those who use this spiritual discipline. It provides a way to hear the thoughts of God as provided through the hearing of God’s spoken word. *Lectio Divina* can provide guidance to the worship leader in any area of life cultivating a fuller experience in worship. Adele Calhoun in her book, Spiritual Disciplines Handbook provides these guidelines for *Lectio Divina*:

Practice includes:

- Prayerfully dwelling on a passage of Scripture
- Listening deeply God’s personal word to you
- Reading not to master the text but be mastered by it
- Staying with one text until the Lord prompts movement to another
- Reading for depth, not breadth
- Contemplative and formational reading of Scripture or other devotional texts⁶⁰

Furthermore, Calhoun continues,

1. *Silencio*-quiet preparation of the heart. Come into God’s presence, slow down, relax, and intentionally release the chaos and noise in your mind to him.
2. *Lectio*- read the word. Read a Scripture passage slowly and outloud, lingering over the words so that they resonate in your heart. When a word or phrase catches your attention, don’t keep reading. Stop and attend to what God is saying to you. Be open to the word. Don’t analyze it or judge it. Listen and wait.
3. *Meditatio* – meditate. Read the Scripture a second time out loud. Savor the words. Listen for any invitation that God is extending to you in this word. Reflect on the importance of the words that light up to you. Like Mary, who pondered the word in her heart, gently explore the ramifications of God’s invitation.

⁵⁹ Hauser, Alan J. “Biblical Interpretation, History of.” Edited by John D. Barry, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, Elliot Ritzema, and Wendy Widder, in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press), 2016, 88.

⁶⁰ Calhoun, 187.

4. *Oratio*-respond, pray. Read the Scripture a third time. Now is the moment to enter into a personal dialogue with God. There is no right or wrong way to do this. The important thing is to respond truthfully and authentically. What feelings has the text aroused in you? Name where you are resistant or want to push back. Become aware of where you feel invited into a deeper way of being with God. Talk to God about these feelings.

5. *Comtemplatio*-Contemplate, rest and wait in the presence of God. Allow some time for the word to sink deeply into your soul. Yield and surrender yourself to God. Before you leave, you might consider a reminder that can help you dwell on or incarnate this word throughout the day.⁶¹

As a worship leader, knowing the Word of God, allowing the Word to penetrate the soul and living out the Word through the life of the worship leader is imperative to make a difference in the life of worshipers. *Lectio Divina* provides time for the worship leader to apply the scriptures to life, but also provides knowledge of the scriptures so that worship leadership is able to impress upon the people the character of God.

Donald Whitney provides more insight on *Lectio Divina* on the benefits and methods of this spiritual tool. Many worship leaders may feel these spiritual disciplines are delving into the earthly realm. Whitney explains,

MEDITATING ON GOD’S WORD—BENEFITS AND METHODS

One sad feature of our modern culture is that meditation has become identified more with non-Christian systems of thought than with biblical Christianity. Even among believers, the practice of meditation is often more closely associated with yoga, transcendental meditation, relaxation therapy, or the New Age Movement. Because meditation is so prominent in many spiritually counterfeit groups and movements, some Christians are uncomfortable with the whole subject and suspicious of those who engage in it. But we must remember that meditation is both commanded by God and modeled by the Godly in Scripture. Just because a cult uses the cross as a symbol doesn’t mean the Church should cease to use it. In the same way, we shouldn’t discard or be afraid of scriptural meditation simply because the world has adapted it for its own purposes.

The kind of meditation encouraged in the Bible differs from other kinds of meditation in several ways. While some advocate a kind of meditation in which you do your best to empty your mind, Christian meditation involves filling your mind with God and truth. For some, meditation is an attempt to achieve complete

⁶¹ Calhoun, 188-189.

mental passivity, but biblical meditation requires constructive mental activity. Worldly meditation employs visualization techniques intended to “create your own reality.” And while Christian history has always had a place for the sanctified use of our God-given imagination in meditation, imagination is our servant to help us meditate on things that are true (Philippians 4:8). Furthermore, instead of “creating our own reality” through visualization, we link meditation with prayer to God and responsible, Spirit-filled human action to effect changes.

In addition to these distinctives, let’s define meditation as deep thinking on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture for the purposes of understanding, application, and prayer. Meditation goes beyond hearing, reading, studying, and even memorizing as a means of taking in God’s Word. A simple analogy would be a cup of tea. You are the cup of hot water and the intake of Scripture is represented by the tea bag. Hearing God’s Word is like one dip of the tea bag into the cup. Some of the tea’s flavor is absorbed by the water, but not as much as would occur with a more thorough soaking of the bag. In this analogy, reading, studying, and memorizing God’s Word are represented by additional plunges of the tea bag into the cup. The more frequently the tea enters the water, the more effect it has. Meditation, however, is like immersing the bag completely and letting it steep until all the rich tea flavor has been extracted and the hot water is thoroughly tintured reddish brown.⁶²

As Whitney has clearly stated, the benefit of *Lectio Divina* allows the meditation on scripture to extract spiritual depth from the Word of God. This depth of scripture allows the worship leader the knowledge to lead congregants into a richer familiarity of God’s characteristics. Without such, congregants are unable to experience a full worship experience.

Meditation

What is the difference between *Solitude* and *Meditation*? Is there a difference? How can we know which is which? These are all good questions and the bible has the answers. While *Solitude* is being alone, quiet and sometimes listening to what God has to say, *Meditation* is considering God’s Kingdom work, His will for our lives, and where the worship leader or worshiper fits into God’s overall plan. The psalmist in Psalm 51 says,

⁶² Whitney, 47.

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
¹¹Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
¹²Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.
¹³*Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.
¹⁴Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation;
Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.
¹⁵O Lord, open my lips,
That my mouth may declare Your praise.
¹⁶For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;
You are not pleased with burnt offering.
¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

Joshua 1:8 expresses the command of meditation of God's Word and the importance of it, "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success." While some may argue that this seems close to the discipline of *Lectio Divina*, the difference is meditation encompasses not only the Word of God, but the movement of God in one's life, the response one has to God's impulses. Other scriptures that emphasis *Meditation* are Psalm 63:6; Psalm 77:12: *The Message*; Psalm 19:14; and Matthew 6:6; 6:25. Each of these passages mention the discipline of mediating on God and the Spirit's influence on the life of the believer. Meditating upon God, His character, His word, and His Kingdom provides the right circumstances to create a well-rounded Worshiper and Worship Leader.

The bible states that meditation is essential to a Godly life, but what is the definition of meditation? "Meditation is a long, ardent gaze at God, his work and his Word. Slowing down

and giving one's undivided attention to God lies at the core of Christian meditation."⁶³ By meditating on God, the worshiper in his private time promotes the personal relationship with the Trinity. Through this relationship, God will bring about fruit as a result of this time of meditation. These spiritual fruits can be but not limited to:

- Developing sight for the interior things of God in the natural and external world
- Seeing beyond a first glance and first impression to the heart of God
- Developing depth of insight
- Developing a love for gazing on God
- Experiencing calmness, serenity and quietness stemming from an awareness of the nearness of God.⁶⁴

These fruits can only be received when spending time in the spiritual disciplines on a consistent basis. A. W. Tozer speaks about the spirit world and different aspects of this world that comes alive in believers when we seek to recognize it, "A spiritual kingdom lies all about us, enclosing us, embracing us, altogether within reach of our inner selves, waiting for us to recognize it. God Himself is here waiting our response to His Presence. This eternal world will come alive to us the moment we begin to reckon upon its reality."⁶⁵ The 'inner selves' in which he speaks hints at the meditation technique in spiritual disciplines. Meditation allows our soul to embrace our salvation and reveals the type of Kingdom work available for His children. Through meditation on God's character believers find who God is, how he works, what his will is and his instructions for doing Kingdom work.

God is omnipresent, everywhere in all things at the same time. Tozer further reveals that "God dwells in His creation and is everywhere indivisibly present in all His

⁶³ Calhoun, 191.

⁶⁴ Calhoun, 191.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 191.

works.”⁶⁶ The works of God demands that His people provide service to those in the world, the only way to join God in His work is meditate upon a personal relationship.

Clement, in his first letter, emphasizes spiritual matters that are important to God. These spiritual matters insist that believers must look to Christ because the Father places great value on His Son. In this letter he states, “Let us note what is good, what is pleasing and acceptable to Him who made us. Let us fix our eyes on the blood of Christ and let us realize how precious it is to his Father; since it was poured out for our salvation and brought the grace of repentance to the whole world.”⁶⁷ Consider what Saint Augustine discovered while meditating on God, “In Your gift we find our rest. There are you our joy. Our rest is our peace.”⁶⁸ Imagine the amount of wisdom that could be imparted to congregants when worship leaders take seriously their role in their own salvation through the spiritual disciplines. The working out of one’s salvation is the responsibility of every believer. According to Calhoun, “Meditation provides an excellent conduit in which to connect with God. “Meditation runs counter to our busy culture, where speed reading, first impressions and skimming are as deep as we go. In meditation we gaze at something or someone long and longingly. We seek the treasure and truth of what we see. Just as moving a prism reveals different bands of color, meditation allows God to shine his truth and light into our hearts.”⁶⁹ McLaren states that, “We have hungers that can’t be fed by facts alone, votes alone, or even the quasi-religious “invisible hand of the market” alone.”⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Ibid, 192.

⁶⁷Clement, “First Letter”, in *Early Christian Fathers*, ed. Cyril C. Richardson, (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 47.

⁶⁸ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, Henry Chadwick, Translator,(New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 278.

⁶⁹ Calhoun, 192.

⁷⁰McLaren, 13.

According to Mel Lawrenz many great leaders take time to deepen their spiritual faith the follow Christ. He states, “The greatest Christian leaders have all lived out of this conviction: they knew that they were not the real influencers, but that they were being used by God, who brought enduring, transforming influence upon people’s lives.”⁷¹ When time is spent deep in spiritual thought considering the Kingdom of God and our responsibility in it, worship flows out of the meditation and communion with God.

Clement’s first letter states that “The humility and obedient submissiveness of so many and so famous heroes have improved not only us but our fathers before us, and all who have received His oracles in fear and sincerity. Since, then, we have benefited by many great and glorious deeds, let us run on to the goal of peace, which was handed down to us from the beginning. Let us fix our eyes on the Father and Creator of the universe and cling to his magnificent and excellent gifts of peace and kindness to us. Let us see him in our minds and look with the eyes of our souls on his patient purpose. Let us consider how free he is from anger toward his whole creation.”⁷² This quote sounds similar to what the Apostle Paul would tell his followers in Christ. Clement reminds the people of God to view God in their mind and soul and wait on the purpose He has for their lives.

Communing with God’s Spirit

Previous sections have revealed spiritual disciplines that connect with the Word of God. In this section, the spiritual disciplines will focus on communing with God’s Spirit, specifically the Trinity. Here we can do more than listen to what God has to say or impress upon us, believers are able to express to Him the emotions and desires that are needed to navigate this

⁷¹ Mel Lawrenz, *Spiritual Influence: The Hidden Power Behind Leadership*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 2012. 28.

⁷² Cyril C. Richardson, “Clement’s First Letter” in *Early Christian Fathers*, (New York: TouchStone), 1996. 49.

earthly journey. McLaren discusses the idea of a the spiritual life, “A spiritual life is a Spirit life, a life in the Spirit, and Jesus’s life and work come into proper focus when we realize his goal was not to start a new religion-and certainly not to create a new religion that would seek to compete with or persecute his own religion, Judaism! No, his goal was to fill with Spirit-wine the empty stone jars of religion – his own religion and any other one. I’d say. His goal wasn’t to start a new religious argument about dogma-mountains; it was to fill hearts with Spirit-fountains. His goal wasn’t to replace one group of powerful religious grown-ups (like Nicodemus) with another, but to help everyone become like little children through Spirit-birth.”⁷³ As the worship leader communes with God, a spiritual alignment takes place that aligns with the purposes of God. One then discovers what is most important in the spiritual realm; the relationship of the believer with the Trinity.

Centering Prayer

The bible speaks different types of prayer, but the preferred example of prayer is the Lord’s Prayer. Prior to Matthew 6:9-14, Jesus’ disciples asked the Lord how to pray. In this passage He gave them an example of how we should pray. This example provides many aspects that tells the believer how to approach God. Here Jesus states what it is like to have a personal relationship with God through His prayer. The Lord’s prayer features sections that glorify God, humble His servants to His feet, ask for His will, and ask for His forgiveness. Each section can be used in Centering Prayer. Acts 17:28 states, “for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’” This scripture reveals that God is in everything we do, therefore if that is true, then as His children connecting through

⁷³ McLaren, 18.

prayer is essential. Jesus insists that one must love Him then He will keep His Word and abide with them (John 14:23). By using prayer we are able to commune and learn from the vast knowledge of God. Psalm 62:1 says, “My soul waits in silence for God only; From Him is my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken.” Here the psalmist states that waiting for God in silence provides strength. John 2:1-11 is the marriage feast where Jesus turns the water into wine. While it may not seem to have anything to do with prayer, specifically centering prayer, this first miracle reveals to the reader that Jesus was enjoying the company of the wedding including his mother and friends. By residing with the Spirit, we can be close to Jesus.

Centering Prayer is the process of capturing the mind so that it can be filled with the Spirit of God. Calhoun defines it, “Centering prayer is a form of contemplative prayer where the pray-er seeks to quiet scattered thoughts and desires in the still center of Christ’s presence.”⁷⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer states that, “All Christian prayer is directed to God through a Mediator, and not even prayer affords direct access to the Father. Only through Jesus Christ can we find the Father in prayer.”⁷⁵ Praying to God through Jesus provides the believer a God that is always approaching the Father on the believer’s behalf. Furthermore, “This form of prayer relies on the awareness that the Holy Spirit resides in the one who prays, connecting them heart-to-heart with God.”⁷⁶ A heart to heart connection with God gives worship leaders the opportunity to experience the glory of God. Centering Prayer focuses on the personhood of the Trinity while allowing the individual to access the strength of the Trinity in daily struggles. Clement teaches

⁷⁴ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 2015, 235.

⁷⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, (New York: SCM Press Ltd, 1995), 162-163.

⁷⁶ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 2015, 236.

about prayer in his letters and offers an individual the access through the power of the Holy Spirit. Clement's prayer states, "Direct their plans, O Lord in accord with "what is good and pleasing to you," so that they may administer the authority you have given them, with peace, considerateness, and reverence, and so win your mercy."⁷⁷ Additionally, Clements continues, "We ask you, Master, be our "helper and defender." Rescue those of our number in distress; raise up the fallen; assist the needy; heal the sick; turn back those of your people who stray; feed the hungry; release our captives; revive the weak; encourage those who lose heart. "Let all the nations realize that you are the only God," that Jesus Christ is your Child, and "that we are your people and the sheep of your pasture."⁷⁸

Calhoun states that, "This form of prayer relies on the awareness that the Holy Spirit resides in the one who prays, connecting them heart-to-heart with God."⁷⁹ In connecting one's heart to God the worship leader can understand instructions from God regarding their life or the ministry which they are involved. The following is a list of fruits that can results when using the discipline, *Centering Prayer*.

God-Given Fruit

- Keeping company with Jesus, trusting that he is working in you while you pray.
- living in more awareness of your union with Christ
- bringing stillness into the busyness of life
- learning to listen to God
- seeking God's presence and assistance in all things
- learning to hold Scripture in your heart
- resting in God's will rather than your own agenda
- developing a quiet center within that is not attached to outcomes⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Clement, 72.

⁷⁸ Cyril C. Richardson, "Clement's First Letter" in *Early Christian Fathers*, (New York: TouchStone), 1996. 71.

⁷⁹ Calhoun, 236.

Centering Prayer is one of the disciplines that allows a connection with Jesus that cannot be replaced with any relationship here on earth. By connecting with God, the worshiper and worship leader can deepen their worship. Worship is deepened when we quiet our hearts and become aware of the presence of the Spirit. In practicing *Centering Prayer* worship leaders can bring this skill over into their leadership of worship. Not only can *Centering Prayer* become an element taught in worship, but it can be the impetus that brings the worship leader into the presence of God.

Fasting

What is fasting? What are its benefits and what is the best way to start using this discipline? These are all questions that those unfamiliar with fasting may ask, but before these questions are answered, where did the idea of fasting come? Looking at the scriptures, The bible several times mentions fasting as a spiritual exercise that releases our souls to touch the infinite and concentrate on the spiritual matters.

Isaiah 58:6-7,

⁶“Is this not the fast which I choose,

To loosen the bonds of wickedness,

To undo the bands of the yoke,

And to let the oppressed go free

And break every yoke?

⁷“Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry

And bring the homeless poor into the house;

When you see the naked, to cover him;

And not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"

Isaiah comments not only about the breaking of earthly bonds on the spirit but that fasting allows the believer to share with the world the material blessings given to them. In I Samuel 7:6 we find that the people of Israel fast and ask forgiveness of God, ⁶“They gathered to Mizpah, and drew water and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day and said there, “We have sinned against the LORD.” And Samuel judged the sons of Israel at Mizpah.” In II Samuel we find King David fasting and begging God to spare his child,

II Samuel 12: 16-20, “David therefore inquired of God for the child; and David fasted and went and lay all night on the ground. The elders of his household stood beside him in order to raise him up from the ground, but he was unwilling and would not eat food with them. Then it happened on the seventh day that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, “Behold, while the child was *still* alive, we spoke to him and he did not listen to our voice. How then can we tell him that the child is dead, since he might do himself harm!” But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David perceived that the child was dead; so David said to his servants, “Is the child dead?” And they said, “He is dead.” So David arose from the ground, washed, anointed *himself*, and changed his clothes; and he came into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he came to his own house, and when he requested, they set food before him and he ate.

Jesus mentioned fasting in relation to the people of His day,

Matthew 6:16-18, “Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites *do*, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

We also see in Matthew 4:2 that Jesus often fasted to connect with His Father, “And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.”⁸⁰ Even into the early church we

⁸⁰ Matthew 4:2, NASB.

see that fasting was performed to gain instructions from the Lord similar to the example of Jesus. In Acts 13:2-3 we find, “While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” Throughout the entire bible we find that fasting was a way to deprive the body and feed the soul. Fasting opens the spiritual eyes of believers so that their soul could receive revelations from the Spirit.

Fasting is the deprivation of physical resources to the body, so that the spirit can concentrate on prayer and meditation. Thomas Kempis, in *The Imitation of Christ* provides clarity on the importance of removing obstacles that may provide resistance in the spirit of one seeking to connect with God. He states, “Behold, food and drink and clothing, and all the other needs appertaining to the support of the body, are burdensome to the devout spirit. Grant that I may use such things with moderation, and that I be not entangled with inordinate affection for them.”⁸¹ The obstacle between physical needs and the spiritual is a problem when opening up the spiritual channel between God and man. Therefore, removing the physical needs provide a conduit for the spirit of man to hear the Spirit of God. Kempis once again states in ‘The Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching’ and instructs,

Rather loose unrighteous bonds, dissolve wrong covenants, free the oppressed and avoid every sinful contract. Give your bread to the hungry and bring the homeless poor under your roof; if you see him naked, clothe him; and do not hide yourself from your own flesh. Then will your light break forth as the morning and you will rise up quickly, and your righteousness will go before you and the glory of God will cover. Then You will cry out and the Lord will hear you while you are still speaking. . . Subdue the flesh, so far as your health permits, by fasting and abstinence from food and drink.⁸²

⁸¹ Kempis, 55.

⁸² Ibid, 167.

In some minds there are thoughts that it is an abuse of the body and rightly so as Geoffrey Wainwright states that “Fasting may likewise serve as a king of ‘negative sacrament’ against the abuse of the body or of the material creation in general. They positively affirm the transcendence of humanity over matter.”⁸³

The practice of fasting may include the following,

- Abstaining from food, drink, shopping, desserts, chocolate and so on to intentionally be with God
- Abstaining from media: TV, radio, music, email, cell phones and computer games to allow space for listening to the voice of Jesus
- Abstaining from habits or comforts: elevators, reading and sports in order to give God undivided attention
- Observing fast days and seasons of the church year
- Addressing excessive attachments or appetites and the entitlements behind them and partnering with God for changed habits.
- Repenting and waiting on God
- Seeking strength to persevere, obey and serve
- Overcoming addictions, compulsions, whims and cravings.⁸⁴

The benefits of spiritual fasting may include the following fruits from the spirit,

- Keeping company with Jesus in relinquishment
- Praying for needs in the body of Christ
- Identifying and fellowshiping with Jesus by choosing to follow his sacrificial example
- Freeing up more time for prayer
- Repenting of self-indulgent, addictive or compulsive behaviors
- Letting these small deprivations remind you of Jesus’ great sacrifice on your behalf
- Seeking strength from God for obedient love and service⁸⁵

Fasting removes all barriers to the spiritual realm when done correctly. It allows the spirit the opportunity to come through the barriers that are presented in the earthly realm. In removing these barriers, worshipers are able to reveal their true identity to the Holy Spirit, discover God’s

⁸³ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 1980. 28.

⁸⁴ Calhoun, 246.

⁸⁵ Calhoun 246.

characteristics and apply these to their lives. Fasting brings a closeness to the Spirit of God that becomes more apparent the more often that it is done. This familiarity provides an ease in worship that is not experienced otherwise. Calhoun states that, “Old Testament saints fasted at times of mourning and national repentance. They fasted when they needed strength or mercy to persevere and when they wanted a word from God.”⁸⁶ As believers, hearing a word from God provides the strength needed to continue. In Jesus day, “Fasting was a normal practice for the Jews. . . Jesus began his ministry with a forty-day fast. He also practiced fasting before healings and to overcome temptation.”⁸⁷ Jesus wanted to commune with the Spirit of God to know what His mission was for that day, week or year. As followers of Jesus, fasting is another spiritual discipline that provides a conduit to deepen the personal relationship with God. When one fasts, “Through self-denial we begin to recognize what controls us. Our small denials of the self-show us just how little taste we actually have for sacrifice or time with God.”⁸⁸ Fasting not only depends on God for nourishment but for spiritual food that goes beyond the needs of the body. Dallas Willard confirms that “Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in him a source of sustenance beyond food. Through it we learn by experience that God’s word to us is a life substance, that it is not food (“bread”) alone that gives life, but also the words that proceed from the mouth of God (Matt 4:4). We learn that we too have meat to eat that the world does not know about (John 4:32, 34). Fast unto our Lord is therefore feasting-feasting on him and on doing his will.”⁸⁹ Do we have the spiritual fortitude to fast for the sake of our spiritual nourishment? If so, then we can be better leaders in worship.

⁸⁶ Calhoun, 246.

⁸⁷ Calhoun, 246.

⁸⁸ Calhoun, 245.

⁸⁹ Richard J. Foster, Kathryn A. Helmers, *Celebrating the Disciplines: A Journal Workbook to Accompany Celebration of Discipline*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers), 1992. 18.

Sabbath

The Sabbath rest is no stranger to the individual familiar with the events of the Old Testament. At creation, God created a Sabbath on the seventh day to rest from the work of Creation. Likewise, God has commanded that believers take time to rest from their work and contemplate the relationship between humanity and God, know God more fully and worship Him. In Exodus 20:8-10 God commands the Israelite people regarding a sabbath day, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.” He did not command this because of His need for worship, but for protection of His creation to take time to rest from work and rejuvenate the spirit. In Exodus and the time of delivery from Egypt:,

“The Jewish understanding of sabbath embraced a special twenty-four-hour rest time that was different from every other day. God’s stop day reminded them that they were no longer slaves that could never stop. They had been freed from Pharaoh’s rule, and the God that ruled them was a restful God—a God who designed all creation for work and rest. Sabbath reminded people that they were finite. They could not constantly be on the go. There were limits to their energy. And to honor these limitations was to honor the infinite God, who himself worked and rested.”⁹⁰

Although some think the Sabbath rest should be restricted to rest and relaxation, Wainwright has a different opinion:,

“The Old Testament creation stories speak of the sabbath rest of God, and the Letter to the Hebrews uses the same notion in an eschatological context. For God, work and rest are not ultimately opposed. . . The Wisdom literature provides a hint of a playful attitude on God’s part towards creation: his wisdom sports on

⁹⁰ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 2015, 43.

the earth, taking delight in humanity (Proverbs 8:30). It may be that play is the resolution of a dialectic between work and rest.”⁹¹

Is it possible that God wanted his children to play as a type of rest? Parents realize the importance of play for children of humanity, perhaps God realizes that same importance for His spiritual Children. In addition to worship, imagine God desiring a day where family and friends honor His creation in relationship with each other. In the New Testament there is enough evidence from Jesus that Sabbath rest was important. Consider Matthew 12:1-7;

At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads *of grain* and eat. ² But when the Pharisees saw *this*, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.” But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. ⁷ But if you had known what this means, ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.

Jesus understood that humankind would misunderstand the idea of a sabbath. In this passage He explains what is meant by the sabbath. If God desires ‘compassion rather than sacrifice’ perhaps he also wants playful times in addition to rest. Jesus later interjected, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).” God meant for the Sabbath to be a form of spiritual rejuvenation so that humanity would thrive in the health of their body as well as their spirit. Calhoun reflects that “Jesus took specific aim at this misunderstanding of the sabbath. As Lord of the sabbath, he freely interpreted the sabbath command, claiming that God gave it to people as a restorative and recuperative gift.”⁹² The writer of Hebrews declares that the

⁹¹ Wainwright, 26.

⁹² Calhoun, 43.

Sabbath rest must be observed by the believer. In the rest of the Sabbath we are rescued from disobedience that otherwise might become evident. Consider Hebrews 4:1, 9-11:,

Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. . . So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience.

When one does not receive rest, defenses begin to fail, and it is easier to slip into the vices of Satan. Once a pattern develops, it is difficult to return to a habit of the spiritual discipline of Sabbath rest.

What is Sabbath rest? Sabbath rest is “God’s gift of repetitive and regular rest. It is given for our delight and communion with God. Time for being during a life of doing particularly characterizes the sabbath.”⁹³ Work requires a body that is able to rebuild and recharge so effectiveness may be kept at optimum levels. But that is not the only reason one needs rest, believers need time to focus on the creator; time to do nothing or something different so that the work of God’s kingdom may continue. Ruth Haley Barton tells of her experience with the sabbath, “The truth is, sabbath keeping is a discipline that will mess with you, because once you move beyond just thinking about it and actually begin to practice it, the goodness of it will capture you, body, soul and spirit. You will long to wake up to a day that stretches out in front of you with nothing in it but rest and delight. You will long for a simple way to turn your heart toward God in worship without much effort.”⁹⁴ For most believers, sabbath rest is something that has escaped their spiritual lives; there is no day of rest. Thoughts of dwelling on the presence of God does not enter the mind or the soul. As believers receive a day of rest, it is

⁹³ Calhoun, 42.

⁹⁴ Ruth Haley Barton, 133.

imperative to understand that a “Sabbath is not dependent upon our readiness to stop. We do not stop when we are finished. We do not stop when we complete our phone calls, finish our project, get through this stack of message, or get out this report that is due tomorrow. We stop because it is time to stop.”⁹⁵ Regular observance of a sabbath rest provides what the body needs so the spirit will be ready and available to commune with the Spirit of God. As the Sabbath day is observed, these fruits of the Holy Spirit will begin to appear,

- Keeping company with Jesus through the sabbath
- Freedom from the addiction to busyness, rush and hurry
- Acknowledging your human limits and living within them
- Honoring the way God created you by living a healthy and intentionally rested life
- Living a weekly rhythm of rest followed by six days of work
- Delighting in God, family, the seasons, meals and all good gifts of creation
- Trusting God for all that you’re not doing or take care of on Sunday.⁹⁶

Robert Webber states that, “Their (Israelites) Sabbath that remembers and pays reverence to God the Creator, and Christ, our Sabbath, who re-creates.”⁹⁶ While the Israelites only pay homage to God, as New believers in God and Christ Jesus, we delight in both. Christ transformed the sabbath into a new creation able to have direct access to God through Him. Take time to rest in God, enjoy Him and rejuvenate so when God calls we have the energy to say, yes.

Celebrating in Worship

Celebration in worship is the pinnacle of a believer’s life because it provides the opportunity to express gratitude to the Savior for all He has done for His children. The worship leader looks forward to worship as it is the place where life becomes whole since the worship

⁹⁵ Calhoun, 42.

⁹⁶ Robert E. Webber, *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books), 2006, 137.

leader's life is built around worship. There are many disciplines that take place both in private worship and corporate worship. These disciplines provide opportunities to connect closer to God.

Confession

While there are many places within the bible that call for confession, there is none as clear and concise as the Psalms. We find in the Psalms that God delights in the confession of our sins, and His anger does not burn long when we confess what He already knows. As a father cares for his earthly children, so much more the Lord cares for those who are His children. His compassion is larger than the earth and does not end. Psalm 103:8-14, speaks of God's characteristics,

The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.
He will not always strive *with us*,
Nor will He keep *His anger* forever.
He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
Just as a father has compassion on *his* children,
So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.
For He Himself knows our frame;
He is mindful that we are *but* dust.

God loves humanity and delights when we confess our sins to Him. It brings the relationship between Creator and the created close together and removes the gap placed between God and humanity. Frederick Buechner articulates, "To confess your sins to God is not to tell him anything he doesn't already know. Until you confess them, however, they are the abyss between

you. When you confess them, they become the Golden Gate bridge.”⁹⁷ Confession welcomes the believer into the presence of God without delay and brings them into the throne room right at the feet of the one who gave His life for renewed life. Renewed life that makes worship sweeter than ever before.

Confession is the act of telling God the sinful acts that Christians have committed against the Spirit of God. Without confession, the Spirit of God is stifled and cannot commune with the believer. The conviction of the Holy Spirit allows the believer to have a sensitivity to the sins that they commit. The bible speaks of the grieving of the Holy Spirit when a child has sinned against God. This same spirit convicts a child of God and providing an escape from the guilt of this sin. This guilt is relieved when confession is given to God. The believer has faith that God will forgive and never remember the sin. This Holy Spirit, “He convicts the world (John 16:8-11) The of convicting (Gk. *Elegxei*) is the work of a prosecuting attorney whereby He seeks to convince someone of something. The Holy Spirit acts as a divine Jesus. He also convinces the world of the righteousness of Christ because of His resurrection and ascension; and He convinces the world of judgment because Satan was judged at the cross.”⁹⁸ When the worship leader confesses their sins, God enables them to lead others into His presence and experience worship that is full of truth. Without confession, the worship leaders’ words and songs lack genuineness and become shallow. It is this essential step that most believers forget when joining God in private or corporate worship. Here, “The Spirit Convicts. John 16:8 declares “the future ministry of the Spirit would be to “convict the world.” *Convict* (Gk. *Elegcho*) means to “convince

⁹⁷ Jan Johnson, *Spiritual Disciplines Companion: Bible Studies and Practices to Transform Your Soul*, (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press), 2009, 190.

⁹⁸ Evans, 144.

someone of something; point something out to someone. The Holy Spirit acts as a divine prosecutor in convicting the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment.”⁹⁹ Conviction of the Spirit provides clarity in a relationship with Jesus and provides comfort to know that when the Spirit convicts, He is following His motive of love for that individual.

If confession clears the path to commune with God, and makes worship fuller why do followers of Christ shy away from this discipline? In life it is difficult for people to admit when they are wrong and have chosen the incorrect path. It is no different when confessing to God the sins that separate individuals from Him. Confession means that the believer must come to terms with the sin that is in their life, adjust their life to prevent the sin from reoccurring, and move on in alignment with God. Marjorie Thompson states, “Humility allows us to be real. We no longer have to put on a good face or false front. There is no need to impress or to hide. We are not trying to protect or advance ourselves in God’s eyes.”¹⁰⁰ Perhaps being ‘real’ in front of the creator takes extra effort and most believers do not desire this in front of their family and friends much less a Holy God. When standing in front of a Holy God, we see clearly who and what we are.

Jesus spoke of confession through repentance and the essential desires of God. Richardson states, “The ministers of God’s grace spoke about repentance through the Holy Spirit, and the Master of the universe himself spoke of repentance with an oath: “For as I live, says the Lord, I do not desire the death of the sinner, but his repentance.”¹⁰¹ God loves therefore His desire is to bring all the Himself. God desires a relationship, but that relationship cannot happen if confession is ignored.

⁹⁹ Evans, 261.

¹⁰⁰ Johnson, 191.

¹⁰¹ Richardson, 67.

Satan works hard at separating worship leaders from God’s love because when separation occurs, worship leaders sit alone in all their failures. Confession is freedom, bringing worship leaders to the throne so they may go out into the world ready to lead others into the throne room. Clement in his first letter stated, “Let us, then ask pardon for our failings and for whatever we have done through the prompting of the adversary.”¹⁰² Satan is quick to point out our failures, but God is quicker to forgive if only worship leaders will confess their shortcomings to Him.

Gratitude

It is often said that having an attitude of gratitude will lift one’s spirit. While this may be a cliché that we have heard many times in life, it is not so far from the truth. The spiritual discipline of gratitude has many far-reaching benefits to the believer. The outcomes of gratitude provide a clear picture of the love of God the Creator. Gratitude removes the fog of existence and paints a menagerie of ways that God takes care of His own. Even in the direst circumstances, gratitude plows a path to light that pulls the believer out of his own self and focuses the light upon God and His Son, Jesus. The bible is full of references to gratitude, consider Psalm 136:1-2:;

Give Thanks to the LORD, for he is good.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of gods.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the Lord of lords:

His love endures forever.

¹⁰² Clement, “Clement’s First Letter” in *Early Christian Fathers*, ed. Cyril C. Richardson, (New York: TouchStone), 1996. 67.

“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) and “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

(Philippians 4:6) The writers of the scriptures, impressed by the Spirit of God, remind us that Praise and Thanksgiving provide a clear recipe for entrance into the presence of God.

Oswald Chambers provides a good definition of gratitude, “Gratitude is a loving and thankful response toward God for his presence with us and within this world. Though “blessings” can move us into gratitude, it is not at the root of a thankful heart. Delight in God and his good will is the heartbeat of thankfulness.”¹⁰³ The fact that is God is completely good is enough for the worship leader to be thankful for his status as a child of God. It is a reason to celebrate in worship even if no other reasons exist. The choice to be grateful shows the level of spiritual maturity we have accomplished. Notice that love is one of the motivations for the discipline of gratitude. Because of the love the believer has for the Lord, we want to thank Him for the smallest of resources He showers down. These resources provided may be small but are not to be forgotten within the context of worship. Gratefulness ushers the worship leader directly into the presence of God. Ignatius spoke to the Ephesians about the importance of worship, “Do your best, then, to meet more often to give glory to God (thankfulness). When you meet frequently, the powers of Satan are confounded, and in the face of your corporate faith his maleficence crumbles.”¹⁰⁴ Gratitude breaks down the powers of Satan and gives power to the believer in Christ. The discipline of gratitude dismantles the stronghold Satan has on the worshiper and allows the glory of God to shine through.

¹⁰³ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers), 1963, 7/29.

¹⁰⁴ Maxwell Staniforth, *The Apostolic Fathers: Early Christian Writings*, (New York: Penguin Books), 1968. 64.

The art of this discipline is learning to thank God for the simple things in life in addition to the obvious gifts that He may bestow. These simple treasures may be as small as rising in the morning and able to take a fresh breath. There are many ways to approach gratitude, here are a few:,

- Prayers and songs that focus on God’s generosity
- Gratefully giving and sharing all you are and have as a sign of your thankfulness to God
- Expressing gratitude to others; the habit of saying “thank you,” “I am so grateful,” “you are so kind” and so forth
- Gratefully noticing God’s presence and gifts throughout the day
- Practicing an abundance mentality; counting the blessings of life
- Keeping a gratitude journal of the myriad gifts God has brought you.
- Daily thanking the Lord for his presence in your life
- Receiving everything you have as a gift rather than as an entitlement.”¹⁰⁵

These suggestions can help the worship leader commune with the Spirit of God thus revealing the Father’s glory opening up the vein of worship. One revealing phrase that Calhoun expresses is, “We, like Jesus, have choices about how to respond to what life dishes up. We each have the power to interpret the facts of our lives. We make the choices that turn us into bitter or grateful people. Carl Jung discovered (and popularized) this statement among the Latin writings of erasmus: *vocatus atque non vocatus deus aderit*. Gratitude is rooted in this reality that “bidden or unbidden, God is present.””¹⁰⁶ Some believers wonder where the presence of God occurs in their lives, gratitude reveals where God inserts his gifts into the life of the believer. Gratitude is the open door that discloses the movement of God; in that movement we sense that God is real. Consider this, “Thanksgiving is possible not because everything goes perfectly but because God

¹⁰⁵ Calhoun, 31.

¹⁰⁶ Calhoun, 32.

is present.”¹⁰⁷ Gratitude aligns the priorities of the believer and show them that God’s overwhelming presence is also intimate.

Celebration

Finally, we arrive at the discipline of Celebration which actively empowers all the other disciplines. This discipline’s foundation is based on the greatest commandment spoken from the mouth of Jesus, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND (Matthew 22:37).’ When hearts are full of the Spirit of God, spontaneous praise breaks forth. The bible provides many passages that refer to celebration when worshiping God: Psalm 139:14 states, I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well.” Lamentations 3:20-24 reads,

Surely my soul remembers
And is bowed down within me.
This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.
The LORD’S loving kindness indeed never cease,
For His compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.
“The **LORD** is my portion,” says my soul,
“Therefore I have hope in Him.

Again, several passages in Psalm speaks of praising and shouting to the Lord,

I will praise the Lord, who counsels me. . .
Therefore, my heart is glad, and my tongue rejoices;
My body also will rest secure. . .
You have made known to me the path of life;
You will fill me with joy in your presence,
With eternal pleasures at your right hand. (Psalm 16:2,9,11)

¹⁰⁷ Calhoun, 32.

Applause, everyone. Bravo, bravissimo!
Shout God-songs at the top of your lungs!”(Psalm 47:1 *The Message*)

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.” (Psalm 139:14)

2 Samuel 6:12-15 speaks of the response King David had when the ark was brought into the city of David:

¹²Now it was told King David, saying, “The LORD has blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, on account of the ark of God.” David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness. ¹ And so it was, that when the bearers of the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. And David was dancing before the LORD with all *his* might, and David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouting and the sound of the trumpet.

These scriptures describe the exuberance of celebration in worship that can be experienced when coupled with the other disciplines of the Holy Spirit. Celebration includes providing the best of our love, devotion, honor, praise and adoration to God. When the believer realizes the blessings that are bestowed on the children of God, one cannot contain the adoration, praise and celebration that is felt and overflows with worship to the Trinity. Jan Johnson articulates, “Worship is, more than anything else, a response to God.” ¹⁰⁸ In the discipline of Celebration, the worshiper responds to the wonder of God and His awe-inspiring power. Ignatius makes a statement about worship; he was not easily veered away from celebration in worship. In his own words he states, “Pray, then, come and join this choir, every one of you; let there be a whole symphony of minds in concert; take the tone all together from God, and sing aloud to the Father with one voice through Jesus Christ, so that He may hear you and know by your good works that

¹⁰⁸ Johnson, 260.

you are indeed members of His Son's Body. A completed unified front will help to keep you in constant communion with God."¹⁰⁹ Celebrating in worship not only glorifies God but helps believers in return. When the believer meets a holy God, priorities come into order and they are faced with the larger picture of Christ' task on earth; the task that believers must continue while on the earth, "In worship we engage ourselves with, dwell upon, and express the greatness, beauty, and goodness of God through thought and the use of words, rituals and symbols. We do this alone as well as in union with God's people. To worship is to see God as worthy, to ascribe great worth to him."¹¹⁰ Johnson relays that, "Worship and celebration flow from and feed into other spiritual disciplines, especially study. Study without worship breeds arrogance but study with worship can result in more substantive worship."¹¹¹ While it is good to study God's word and learn more about the God we serve, if all that is done is an intake of knowledge, then worship becomes shallow and will not change the believer. All of life is linked to the spiritual change that occurs when one encounters the power of God. Worship allows the believer to engage with God in a way that is not possible within the other disciplines. One definition describes, "Celebration is a way of engaging in actions that orient the spirit toward worship, praise and thanksgiving. Delighting in all the attentions and never-changing presence of the trinity fuels celebration."¹¹² Enjoying the presence of the Trinity becomes the focus of the believer in worship; all focus is placed on God. God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit become the sole recipients of adoration and celebration. Believers forget about each other and become awe-struck with God's presence. Calhoun states that, "Identifying and pursuing those things that

¹⁰⁹ Staniforth, 62.

¹¹⁰ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers), 1988. 177.

¹¹¹ Johnson, 260.

¹¹² Calhoun, 28.

bring the heart deep gladness and reveling in them before the Lord. This may include time spent with others, sharing meals, working, serving, worshiping, laughing, listening to music, dancing and so on.”¹¹³ While worshiping in a corporate setting is not to be ignored, worship is so much more than a once a week ritual; it is a life filled with worship combining all the disciplines together in order to make a life that is committed to God. It important to remember that “God celebrates. He invented delight, joy and celebration. And one way we enter into the divine life of the Trinity is through celebration. Whether solemn or exhilarating, formal or spontaneous, celebration can enlarge our capacity to enjoy and serve God. Celebrating God does not depend on perfect circumstances or happy feelings. Even in prison Paul and Silas found something to sing about (Acts 16).”¹¹⁴ No matter the circumstance, believers can worship God through the most debilitating circumstances by remembering that God is in control. We need only to forget our circumstances and “Set (our) eyes on God as (we) celebrate and forget how (we) look. God delights in all kinds of worship.”¹¹⁵ If believers are successful in worshiping completely without reserve, then there is hope to establish a spiritual relationship with the Trinity that guides one through life relying on the spirit of God to take control of our spiritual health.

Giving Back to the Kingdom of God

Jesus was not shy in promoting the Kingdom of God; His Father impressed on Him in many ways to care for the people He had created. In fact, Jesus came to show humanity the way to live. After being the example for the disciples through His three-year journey, He provided them with instructions and commanded them with these words. Matthew 28:18-20 states; “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on

¹¹³ Calhoun, 28.

¹¹⁴ Calhoun, 29.

¹¹⁵ Calhoun, 29.

earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”” Many believers think that this passage is intended only for those who are full-time in the ministry, when this passage is a commandment for all believers. The spiritual disciplines having been created in order to provide a guide on enriching one’s spiritual life. One of the last steps in the spiritual maturing process is to give back to the Kingdom of God by showing the difference Christ makes in a life given completely to Him. The following disciplines are intended to perpetuate the Kingdom of God in the life of the believer.

Forgiveness

There are several passages in the bible that provide direction in forgiveness of the people around you. Jesus often taught these principles to His disciples because it was a different paradigm from the culture in which they belonged. In Matthew 5:44 He says; “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,” Again when teaching the disciples how to prayer in Matthew 6:12 He states, ““And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” He continues in Matthew 6:14-15 while explaining the words of the prayer He taught, “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” Further in the writings of Paul we find that he compels the church in Colossians 3:13; “bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.” And again, to the church of Ephesus he is urging them in Ephesians 4:32 to, “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each

other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” There are many more instances in the bible that provide evidence for forgiveness within the life of the believer. Imitating Christ-like forgiveness to those in the church and community is the path to spiritual maturity. It is not an easy choice, however it provides a connection with the Lord that cannot be equaled in any life event on the earth for we are partnering with God to forgive the unforgiveable.

The Didache is an instructional manual that was created in the first century for the disciples on the teachings of Jesus. In this book we find these words,

Now this is the path of life: first, you shall love the Lord who made you; secondly; your neighbor as yourself; and whatever you do not wish to be done to you, do not do that to others. Here is the instruction (*didache*): Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies. Fast for those who persecute you. What good is it if you love only those who love you? Don't the Gentiles do this? But love those that hate you and you will have no enemies. Abstain from fleshly and worldly lusts. If anyone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the left one to him and you will be perfect. If anyone makes you march with him a mile, then go with him two. If anyone takes your coat, give him your tunic as well; and if someone takes anything of yours from you, do not ask for it back. Give to everyone who asks, and do not ask for it back, for the Father wants all to share in His gifts.¹¹⁶

This passage is reminiscent of the words of Jesus, although they may not be an exact replica of the gospels. These words were reflections of the words Jesus taught to His disciples; words that provide clarity to believers in every century. Ignatius wrote to the Magnesians these words,

Do you all then, imitating the same divine conduct, pay respect to one another, and let no one look upon his neighbor after the flesh, but do you continually love each other in Jesus Christ. Let nothing exist among you that may divide you; but be you united with your bishop, and those who preside over you, as a type and evidence of your immortality.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Didache, “The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles” in *Readings In Historical Theology: Primary Sources of the Christian Faith*, ed. Robert F. Lay, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2009), 25.

¹¹⁷ Ignatius, “Letter to the Magnesians” in *Readings In Historical Theology: Primary Sources of the Christian Faith*, ed. Robert F. Lay, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2009), 120.

While the word, forgiveness, is absent from this quote, the words, love and united, provide clarity in how forgiveness is a key element in the existence of the church. Revenge is part of the modern culture and surrounds humanity everywhere; in using forgiveness believers bring to the world the love of God; a love so rich it cannot be understood only given. The Didache provides these words of encouragement to unity within the influence of the believers, “Gather together frequently for the building up of your souls; for your entire life of faith will do you little good unless you are found to be perfect in the last times.”¹¹⁸ In gathering together, followers of Jesus the divine love that is given through the forgiveness of sins through the cross, when believers experience forgiveness, forgiving others becomes easier. Connecting with other children of God sharpens the spiritual senses and reminds the believer that since God forgives, so must we.

Examen

The spiritual exercise of the examination of one’s self allow the spirit of God to flow effortlessly through the Christian and provides a connection with God that is unbroken. Baron provides a definition of Examen, “Self-examination is a practice that facilitates spiritual awakening-an awakening to the presence of God as God really is and an awakening to ourselves as we really are.”¹¹⁹ When the believer measures themselves against a holy God, it allows the believer to see clearly where they have strayed. Correction and confession of sins keeps the spiritual connection with God intact. Saint Paul encourages the church in this manner, Colossians 1:9 says, “For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” Only by

¹¹⁸ Didache, 29.

¹¹⁹ Baron, 91.

having the knowledge of God’s will and wisdom can the Christian be able to examine their life. Worship leaders also need this clarity in examining their own lives before leading people in the presence of God. This clarity ensures that the worship leader has examined their own lives before leading others into the presence of God. Paul reveals in Philippians 1:9-10 that examination must be continual if the believer wants to be blameless in the last day, “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;” The *Examen* provides a tool in which the worship leader can examine their life in the context of how Christ lived His life.

Saint Ignatius Loyola created many spiritual exercises, and “The examen is a foundational aspect of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius Loyola (AD 1491 – 1556). He believed that discernment came out of awareness of how God moved uniquely in each soul. Our insomnia, nervous stomach, difficult interaction, and headache can all take their place as a possible way of more deeply leaning into God.”¹²⁰

Examen as a spiritual discipline provides intelligibility to the life of the believer so that the cloudiness of sin can be cleared, and the believer can see clearly what steps need to be taken to work out one’s salvation. Believers and those who lead worship are constantly working out their salvation. By using examen as a frequent spiritual discipline, they are best able to see their life fit into the will of God. In Clement’s First Letter we read the expectations of God:,

How blessed and amazing are God’s gifts, dear friends! Life with immortality, splendor with righteousness, truth with confidence, faith with assurance, self-control with holiness! And all these things are within our comprehension. What, then, is being prepared for those who wait for him? The Creator and Father of eternity, the all-holy, himself knows how great and wonderful it is. We, then,

¹²⁰ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 2015, 59.

should make every effort to be found in the number of those who are patiently looking for him, so that we may share in the gifts he has promised. And how shall this be, dear friends? If our mind is faithfully fixed on God; if we seek out what pleases and delights him; if we do what is in accord with his pure will and follow in the way of truth. If we rid ourselves of all wickedness, evil, avarice, contentiousness, malice fraud, gossip, slander, hatred of God, arrogance, pretension, conceit, and inhospitality. God hates those who act in this way;¹²¹

God is not pleased with those who sin; therefore it pleases Him when we examine ourselves and act in the manner He has commanded. Paul Evans states, “Christ is involved in the cleansing of the body. He is producing sanctification in the believer (Eph. 5:25-27). This denotes the progressive sanctification which Christ is cleansing the church.”¹²² The emptying of the church to purification occurs throughout the life of believers until they meet God in heaven or see Jesus in His return to the earth.

Thomas Kempis encourages in *The Imitation of Christ* how to be a follower of Christ that proves themselves to be worthy of the life God provides in His Son. Here he warns about the judgement of others through emotions and the failure to examine one’s self,

Look well unto thyself and beware that thou judge not the doings of others. In judging others, a man laboureth in vain; he often erreth, and easily falleth into sin; but in judging and examining himself he always laboureth to good purpose. According as a matter toucheth our fancy, so oftentimes do we judge of it; for easily do we fail of true judgement because of our own personal feeling. If God were always the sole object of our desire, we should the less easily be troubled by the erring judgment of our fancy.¹²³

Our human desire is to judge based on our own feelings about others, therefore the bible warns against judging others. If one’s only desire is to look at people through the eyes of God, then judging would be allowed. As it is, believers cannot prevent the human side from judging, the

¹²¹ Richardson, 59-60.

¹²² Evans, , 252.

¹²³ Thomas A Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, (Middletown: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform) 2014, 9.

only prevention for this is to use the spiritual discipline tool, *Examen*, to provide a view of one's sins. Only then will the believer be able to view themselves without a jaded view.

Service

Service is a spiritual discipline that scares most people. It is a part of the relationship with Jesus that most would love to forget. For others, it is a welcome discipline to do something that shows the love they have for God; they welcome it and seek an opportunity to serve in any capacity. The bible clearly states that service is a part of being in a relationship with the Trinity. Jesus did not shy away from service for the Kingdom of God and He calls us to do the same. In Amos 5:14-15 we find that believers should do good and promote justice, "Seek good and not evil, that you may live; And thus, may the LORD God of hosts be with you, just as you have said! Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the gate! Perhaps the LORD God of hosts may be gracious to the remnant of Joseph." Further in Amos 5:24 we find, "But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Amos is a book about socio-economic justice, so it is not surprising that he stresses justice in his book. These verses provide evidence that God desires that the believer serve in some capacity in the Kingdom of God; one of those ways is through justice. Also, in the Old Testament we find in Micah 6:8 that God requires three things of humans, "He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?"

In the New Testament there is several passages that prove that service is required of the children of God. In Hebrews 13:3 Paul reminds the church to "Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, *and* those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the

body.” In James 1:27-2:1 from *The Message* Christians are encouraged to serve those less fortunate,

Anyone who sets himself up as “religious” by talking a good game is self-deceived. This kind of religion is hot air and only hot air. Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world. My dear friends, don’t let public opinion influence how you live out our glorious, Christ-originated faith. If a man enters your church wearing an expensive suit, and a street person wearing rags comes in right after him, and you say to the man in the suit, “Sit here, sir; this is the best seat in the house!” and either ignore the street person or say, “Better sit here in the back row,” haven’t you segregated God’s children and proved that you are judges who can’t be trusted?

Recently, a news article mentioned that March 15, 1954, Billy Graham had the first integrated crusade in the United States. This date is memorable because up to this point, Billy Graham had segregated crusades separating blacks from whites. It was on this day that he did what James proclaimed and did not segregate the children of God. He worked justice for the Kingdom of God. As children of God, we must serve all people without reservation.

Clement’s *First Epistle* states there must be a “desire to love others by seeking their good, protections, gain and fair treatment. He (Jesus) bids us, therefore, to believe on him with all our heart, and not to be slack or be negligent in “every good deed””¹²⁴ It is the responsibility of the Christian to promote the Kingdom of God through service. What is service and how is it defined? Service has many meanings and here Evans defines service,

The word *service* (Gk. *Diakonia*) is a general word for ministering or serving others. The word is used in a broad sense and refers to ministry and service to others in a general way. A sampling of the usages of this word indicates that: Timothy and Erastus served Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:22); Paul served the Jerusalem believers by bringing them a monetary gift (Rom. 15:25); Onesiphorus served at Ephesus (2 Tim. 1:18); Onesimus was helpful to Paul while he was in prison (Philem. 13); the Hebrew believers display acts of kindness (Heb. 6:10). From these and other examples, it appears an important aspect of serving is

¹²⁴ Richardson, 59.

helping other believers who are in physical need. This gift would be less conspicuous, with the believers serving others in the privacy of a one-to-one relationship.¹²⁵

In the context of service, when someone is in need, the believer in Christ should examine the situation, seek the council of the Holy Spirit and serve in the capacity that the Holy Spirit has impressed them to do. Kempis in *The Imitation of Christ* declares,

He doth much who loveth much. He doth much who doth well. He doth well who ministereth to the public good rather than to his own. Oftentimes that seemeth to be charity which is rather carnality, because it springeth from natural inclination, self-will, hope of repayment, desire of gain. He who hath true and perfect charity, in no wise seeketh his own good, but desireth that God alone be altogether glorified.¹²⁶

The desire to serve must come from spiritual maturity that seeks to glorify the Trinity without any longing to seek one's own good. Those who seek their own fortunes are moving toward the path of death as the Didache warns,

Those found in this way are far from meekness and patience; they love meaningless things and seek rewards for themselves while having no compassion on the needy, nor lifting a finger for those in trouble. Neither do they seek to know Him who made them; they are murderers of children, corrupters of God's image, oppressors, unjust judges who err in all things. From all these types my children, may you be delivered.¹²⁷

The spiritual discipline of service does not always equate with high honors, in fact, it is met with very few accolades. Donald Whitney states,

The ministry of serving may be as public as preaching or teaching, but more often it will be as sequestered as nursery duty. It may be as visible as singing a solo, but usually it will be as unnoticed as operating the sound equipment to amplify the solo. Serving may be as appreciated as a good testimony in a worship service, but typically it's as thankless as washing dishes after a church social. Most service,

¹²⁵ Evans, 288-289.

¹²⁶ Kempis, 9-10.

¹²⁷ Didache, "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" in *Readings In Historical Theology: Primary Sources of the Christian Faith*, ed. Robert F. Lay, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2009), 27.

even that which seems the most glamorous, is like an iceberg. Only the eye of God sees the larger, hidden part of it.¹²⁸

It is true that service will be a thankless part of this spiritual discipline. Service is about doing what God proclaimed to Christians through Jesus Christ while He was here on earth. It is about giving glory to God through the salvation that frees all Christians from their sins. Serving is the grateful duty of the children of God in gratitude for all that God has done. Ignatius stated it in this manner, “Whatever we do, then, let it be done as though He Himself were dwelling within us, we being as it were His temples and He within us their God. For in fact, that is literally the case; and in proportion as we rightly love Him, so it will become clear to our eyes.”¹²⁹ The love we have for God will be the direct result of the service we provide to the world. In a letter to Polycarp, Ignatius encourages these actions,

Take care that widows are not neglected; next to the Lord, be yourself their guardian. See that nothing is ever done without consulting you and do nothing yourself without consulting God – as I am sure you never do. Take a firm stand. Hold services more frequently and hunt up everyone by name.¹³⁰

And in the same letter we find,

Make every effort to satisfy the Commander under whom you serve, and from whom you will draw your pay; and be sure that no deserter is found in your ranks. For a shield take your baptism, for a helmet your faith, for a spear your love, and for body-armour your patient endurance; and lay up a store of good works as a soldier deposits his savings, so that one day you may draw the credits that will be due to you. And be patient and gentle with one another, as God is with you.”¹³¹

¹²⁸ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, (Colorado Springs: Navpress) 1991, 116.

¹²⁹ Ignatius, “Letter to the Ephesians” in *The Apostolic Fathers: Early Christian Writings*, Maxwell Staniforth, Translator, (London: Penguin Books), 1968, 65.

¹³⁰ Ignatius, “Letter to Polycarp” in *The Apostolic Fathers: Early Christian Writings*, Maxwell Staniforth, Translator, (London: Penguin Books), 1968, 110.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 111.

God loves His children and wants what is best for them. Service provides an opportunity to be Christ-like and see others through the eyes of Jesus. While serving may not be comfortable for some people, it is essential that it is practiced as a spiritual discipline to promote the Kingdom of God in this world. Jan Johnson states that “Service, as a spiritual discipline, is doing good for others with no thought of ourselves. Although we are commanded to serve others, service also acts as a spiritual discipline as it trains us to be selfless, to get our spirituality beyond our heads and into our hands, to connect with God in everything we do.”¹³² God calls to service his children every day in holy God-appointments. It is through our spiritual ears that we hear His call and respond accordingly. Only through responding to these God-appointments can Christians ever learn to see others through the eyes of God.

¹³² Johnson, 47.

Chapter 4

IMPLEMENTATION OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES WITH THE WORSHIP TEAM

Purpose of the Study

Now that there is a brief explanation of the disciplines, it is time to share the findings with worship leaders of Monte Vista Baptist Church. The goal of this study is to bring to light selected disciplines to the worship leaders that will enhance the worship experienced within the context of Monte Vista. Furthermore, there is a desire for the worship leaders to learn the disciplines in preparation for them to share them in their perspective areas. Once they have learned these skills and become proficient, it is desired that they begin groups of their own within the church to share the spiritual disciplines.

Organizing the Disciplines

While a specific order of the disciplines has not been identified, for the purpose of the group there will be an order to promote continuity within worship that flows from the Spirit of God. This order will begin from the standpoint of a new believer and their search to learn more about the Spirit of God and the relationship development with Jesus Christ. It is hoped that these disciplines will carry into everyday life and become second nature for the worship leaders. The specific disciplines will be organized in the following way: Lectio Divina, Solitude, Meditation, Centering Prayer, Fasting, Sabbath, Forgiveness, Examen, Confession, Gratitude, Celebration, Forgiveness, and Service. These twelve disciplines will be the foundation that will propel the worship leaders into another level of worship. Each discipline will be fully developed

within its own context for the worship leader. The desire is for these worship leaders to become skilled in each discipline that a spark for the worship of God will develop.

Relationship to Worship

How are all these disciplines related to each other in worship? One must begin at the time of rebirth into the spirit to gain this information. The bible tells of the curiosity of Nicodemus where he came to Jesus by night. In John 3:1-8, we find this story where he discovers how to be born again,

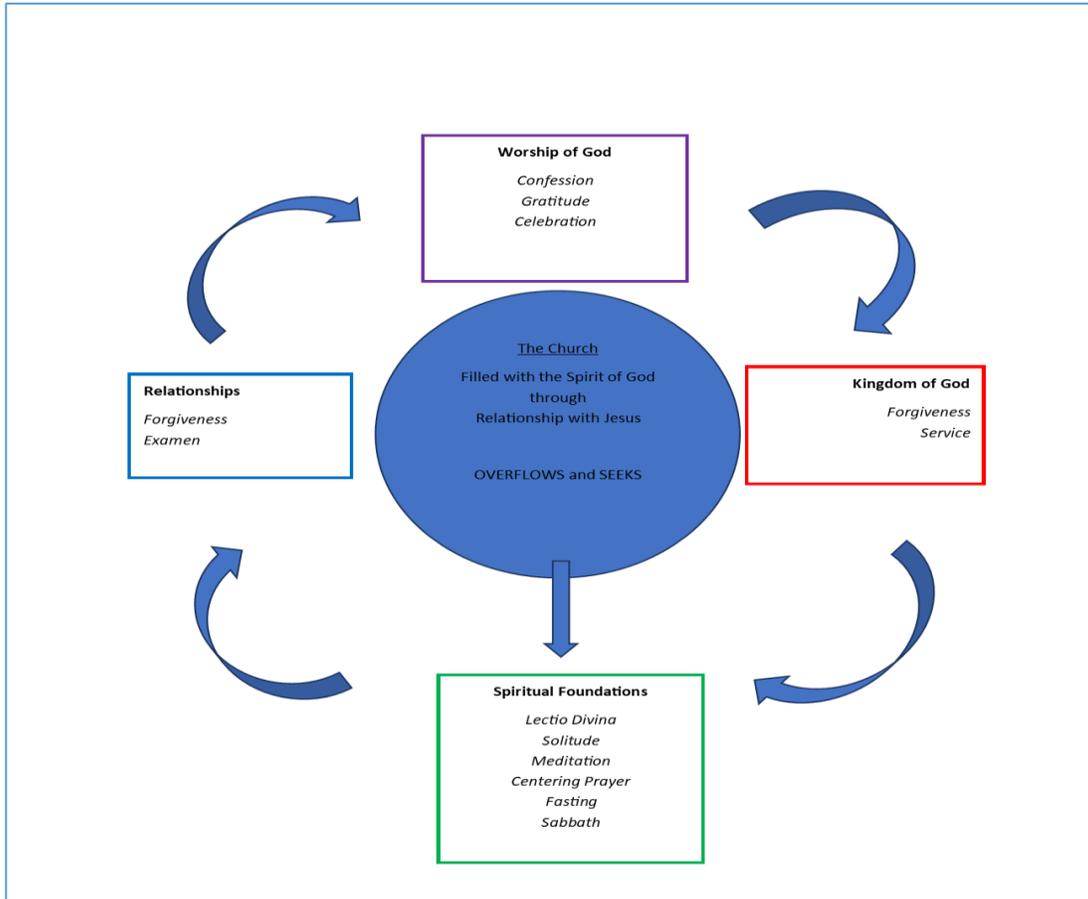
Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God *as* a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus *said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again. ‘The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.’”

The belief in Jesus brings to life the Spirit of God within human beings. It springs to life the dead part of the soul which enlivens a curiosity for the Spirit of God. A curiosity that longs to learn more about the God, the Son, and the Spirit. It is through this curiosity that these spiritual disciplines can quench the thirst of new believers in Christ.

Psalms 63:1 reflects, “O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.” The soul actively seeks after God, but without direction wanders aimlessly becoming disenchanted, and

eventually reverting to the ways of the world. It is during this search that the spiritual disciplines must be introduced.



APPENDIX A - Flowchart of the Spiritual Disciplines in Worship

The chart above shows the flow of the Spiritual Disciplines within a life of worship. The disciplines that have been selected for the worship team of Monte Vista have been ordered to maximize the effectiveness of their individual contribution. When a new Christian accepts Christ, the spirit is energized and begins to desire knowledge about God. The spiritual disciplines that give spiritual foundations are: Lectio Divina, Solitude, Meditation, Centering

Prayer, Fasting, and Sabbath. These disciplines will set the foundation for the spirit to grow in Christ. As these disciplines become manifest with the believer, then a desire for relationships begin to develop. During the development of these relationships with other believers, the following disciplines are learned and implemented: Forgiveness, and Examen. Relationships with other believers naturally moves the new Christian to the Worship of God through Confession, Gratitude, and Celebration. As the experience of worship deepens, the new believer gains insight to the Kingdom of God and their role through the Great Commission in Matthew 28. It is here that the discipline of Forgiveness is reintroduced, and Service becomes a priority. (See Appendix A)

Engaging Worship Leaders

The primary purpose of the research for this thesis is to provide information on the disciplines and how they affect the way we worship. Engaging the worship leaders to attend the small group that is created to demonstrate the selected disciplines is a difficult task. One must prove the value of the study before the worship leaders are willing to partake. Therefore, I turned to the flagship of our worship ministry, the Sanctuary Choir. There are many worship leaders that reside in this entity, so I chose to use them to display the small group agenda.

During the beginning of rehearsal, I decided to make use of the Centering Prayer discipline to help advertise the small group and its content based on the Spiritual Disciplines. Beginning with the introduction I asked the Sanctuary Choir to enter a time of prayer; I proceeded to walk them through the various simplified steps of Centering Prayer. At first appearance, it seemed that many of them were not sure of this new challenge. Afterward I explained that a new small group would be formed to discover the spiritual disciplines that

enhance worship. This group was targeted for the worship leaders of the group, specifically those in the praise team, soloists, and directors.

Preparation Requirement Questionnaire

In order to acquire their prior knowledge of the spiritual disciplines, it was imperative that I used a tool to determine where on the spectrum they landed. A preparation questionnaire was administered to everyone who expressed interest in the class. A personal invitation was designed and sent out to all worship leaders. Each worship leader was asked to participate in the pre-test. The questionnaire is reviewed during the interview process prior to the starting date of the group.

The questionnaire (see Appendix B) involved identifying the different types of spiritual disciplines that would be introduced. The purpose of the pre-test is to determine fore knowledge of the disciplines as well as spiritual competency. The results of the test will not be shared in the small group nor in the results of this thesis; only in general terms will the results be discussed. Additionally, the questionnaire was not intended to be extensive, only to determine the worship leader's status in spiritual formation.

Individual Interviews

The intent of the interview process is to get to know each individual worship leader so I will be more in tune with their personal life story before we begin sharing in the twelve spiritual disciplines together. There are ten basic questions that I asked each person; followed by a review of their preparation questionnaire. Here are the questions,

1. How is your current relationship with Jesus?
2. Where could you improve?

3. Are you satisfied with your knowledge of scripture?
4. Could you defend your decision to follow Jesus?
5. What are your current relationships like?
6. Do you have difficulty forgiving those around you?
7. Are there extended times in your life where you spend meditating on spiritual things?
8. Do you desire a deeper relationship with God?
9. Is there anything that would prevent you from deepening your relationship with Jesus?
10. What would you like to obtain from learning these spiritual disciplines?

After discussing these questions, there will be a discussion of the questionnaire that each person was required to fill out. Each statement in the questionnaire (Appendix B) was to be answered on a scale of 1-5 with 5 denoting the statement is most like the individual and 1 the least.

All numbers in the twelve statement will be added together and matched on the following scale:

50-60 points – There is a high knowledge of the spiritual disciplines and they are practiced consistently.

40-49 points – There is a good understanding of the spiritual disciplines and they are practiced regularly.

30-39 points – There is an average knowledge of some spiritual disciplines, but don't always practice them.

20-29 points – There is some knowledge of the spiritual disciplines and practice is limited to an essential few.

10-19 points – There is limited knowledge of spiritual disciplines and limited practice.

0 – 9 points – There is no knowledge of the spiritual disciplines or how to practice them.

After completing the interview, the individual is ready to be placed in the class and the foundation of spiritual disciplines can begin.

Overview of Purpose

A review of the purpose of the spiritual disciplines in the lives of the believer will be explained at the first meeting of the small group. This small group has been created to experience a deeper and fuller worship experience through the selection of specific disciplines for the believer and worship leader. The purpose goes deep into the culture of our society; “Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people.”¹³³ This statement outlines the most important task of worship leaders in the church today; there needs to be a concerted effort on the part of the church to create an atmosphere that will help people reach deep into their spirit and grow into people that are committed in a relationship with the Savior.

A relationship with Christ Jesus becomes the path to deeper worship. Deeper worship is experienced when one knows the person that is being worshiped. Without the relationship, one is only going through the motions. Psalm 42:7 says “Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls; All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me.” The deeper one goes into the spiritual disciplines, the deeper one’s spirit grows. Throughout the bible, God encourages His children to know Him. The people today are no different, God still wants to know His children.

John Jefferson Davis states, “The renewal of interest in more contemplative forms of spirituality in evangelical circles reflected a growing sense that the more activist elements of the tradition—preaching, programs, meetings—were still leaving many pastors and laypeople less

¹³³ Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers), 1998, 1.

than fully nourished spiritually. Many resonated with the observations of Peter Scazzero, a busy and successful pastor of New Life Fellowship, a large multiracial church in Queens, New York. Too many Christian today, he noted, feel “overscheduled, tense, frantic, preoccupied, fatigued and starved for time. . . We are too active for the kind of reflection needed to sustain a life of love with God and others.”¹³⁴ The worship leaders in this small group are unaware that the spiritual nourishment that is needed for leadership is time consuming. One of the goals of this group is to experience the difference it makes to be in tune with Jesus Christ before you go out to lead worship.

Explaining the Need for Spiritual Disciplines

Why are spiritual disciplines needed in the life of the church? This is a question that many believers have asked about the spiritual formation of the church. Most consider obtaining the knowledge of the scriptures enough to sustain the spirit’s walk in the world. Surprisingly, most believers can tell the stories in the bible, but few can explain how God is moving in their lives. The disciplines provide a conduit to connect with God in a real way that opens the lines of communication on a two-way street. No longer is the conversation with God one-sided. Foster says, “The classical Disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths. They invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm. They urge us to be the answer to a hollow world.”¹³⁵ Worship leaders have a huge responsibility to remove the worldly layers prior to worship so that congregations can see we have already been with God.

¹³⁴ John Jefferson Davis, *Meditation and Communion with God: Contemplating Scripture in an Age of Distraction*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press), 2012, 6.

¹³⁵ Foster, 1.

This type of relationship with God is contagious. Believers want to know that God is present and active in their lives. The spiritual disciplines provide the path to God.

Desired Outcomes

In this small group of worship leaders, we are hoping to spark an interest in the spiritual realm that will last a lifetime. Many people are not aware of the spiritual disciplines and how to apply them to their personal lives. Worship leadership is a direct reflection upon the life that is lived by the worship leader. Although the spiritual changes may be subtle when coupled with the spiritual disciplines, these changes will bring to the worship leader a stronger connection to the people bringing a more authentic experience to corporate leadership in worship.

The hope is that these worship leaders will sense a renewal of energy and encouragement in their spiritual lives that will overflow into their leadership throughout the year. The spiritual fervor of the worship leader will propel the congregation into the depths of worship that will change their lives forever. Robert Webber asserts in *The Divine Embrace*, “What lies at the heart of biblical Christianity is God restoring creation, the place of his habitation, and calling into being a family of his own. God’s desire is a place of dwelling and a people in whom he dwells and they in him.”¹³⁶

Schedule for Small Group

After the initial meeting with the worship leader small group, we decided to meet twice a week on Wednesday and Sunday evenings. The class has seven worship leaders that have

¹³⁶ Robert Webber, *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books), 2006, 223.

committed to attend. The class meets for one hour and thirty minutes each day and focuses on the spiritual discipline of the week. Each class adheres to the following schedule:

1. Welcome with Refreshments. (Wednesday only for refreshments)
2. Review of last week's assignment.
3. Comments on the success or failure of the assignment.
4. Introduce new spiritual discipline. (once a week)
5. Experiment with the introduced discipline.

The class will run for twelve weeks and covers the twelve disciplines that have been discussed previously in this chapter. Each discipline is discussed with proper attention to biblical support and explanations on the process of each discipline.

Each participant is expected to put forth their best effort to adhere to the spiritual discipline schedule each week. It is suggested that each worship leader spend 30 minutes a day to work through and process each spiritual discipline. New spiritual disciplines begin on Sundays with a check-in on status on Wednesdays. Wednesdays are used to answer questions and respond to any that may arise within the week.

Syllabus and Assignments

While this class is for volunteer worship leaders, it was thought to be helpful to include a syllabus (Appendix C) with the anticipated assignments. The syllabus is fluid and not intended to be strict. If extra time is needed to complete a given spiritual discipline, then the syllabus will be adjusted to reflect time needed to grasp that specific discipline. The syllabus includes the assignments for the worship leader in the order which the spiritual disciplines are introduced.

These tools are in place to provide a firm grasp on the importance of spiritual formation and the amount of work it takes in the realm of worship leadership.

Additionally, there is provided for the group a listing of the spiritual disciplines (Appendix D) and the process on implementing the discipline within the devotion time of the individual. These explanations are for future reference and allows the worship leader to refer to these at a later date when the class has ended.

Spiritual Journaling

The apostle Paul often wrote letters to the churches to provide response to spiritual issues and new ideas that would be passed down to other churches. These letters are the spiritual journals that he shares with Christians today. Here the believer can see the spiritual processes of Paul and the other believers in various churches in the first century; this helps guide the process of their own spiritual formations.

Ignatius wrote to the churches and included in his writings a letter to the Ephesians. These words, like Paul's, provide a look at the spiritual processes and disciplines that encompassed the first and second centuries. Ignatius writes, "I hope to write you a further letter -if, in answer to your prayers, Jesus Christ allows it, and God so wills – in which I will continue this preliminary account for you of God's design for the New Man, Jesus Christ."¹³⁷ This quote clearly refers to a couple of disciplines that was practiced by the early church; prayer and the telling of the gospel regarding Jesus Christ.

In this class, the worship leaders are asked to keep a spiritual journal in the way of Paul and Ignatius as if they are writing a letter of their walk for others to read and learn from their

¹³⁷ Staniforth, 66.

experiences. This journal is fluid and the length is left to each individual. During each class the worship leaders will be asked to share their experiences in the spiritual discipline of the week. There is expectation that the readings of these journals will propel others in their walk just as the writing of Paul and Ignatius encourages believers today.

Applying Spiritual Disciplines

The application of the spiritual disciplines to an existing schedule is difficult. If a devotional time has not been set, then the challenge becomes for the worship leader to carve out time to set the discipline. While all the of disciplines are not done every week, it is expected that the introduction of the spiritual disciplines will spark an interest in a regular rotation of the disciplines.

During the class, there will be discussion about the creation of a devotion or worship time. This worship time is essential to the spiritual growth of each individual and is where the spiritual disciplines will take root. While failure will occur, there is hope that the organization of applying these spiritual disciplines within the confines of a group will compel accountability. Accountability that will last after the end of the class. Richard Foster declares that “God has given us the Disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of receiving his grace. The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us.”¹³⁸ This transformation can only occur with consistent application of the Disciplines with the context of a life that is focused on spiritual transformation. Proverbs 27:17 states, “As iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another.” Therefore, it is imperative that each worship leader view the process of

¹³⁸ Foster, 7.

Spiritual Disciplines as an essential need for the Christian walk. Without the transformation, their leadership in worship will become shallow and empty.

Establishing Spiritual Discipline Goals

To be effective in the spiritual disciplines, one must set reasonable goals to learn the process of practicing spiritual disciplines. Each worship leader will be encouraged to create written goals to facilitate the establishment of these goals in a regular routine. Fitting the spiritual disciplines into daily life will ensure that the spiritual disciplines are consistently practiced.

The next goal, the worship leader is asked to actively notate within corporate worship new feelings, thoughts or visible changes in their attention. These slight changes may be small; they usually occur in areas of worship that one does not notice. Therefore, it is important to note anything that may be a different experience in worship for the worship leader. Notating these changes will provide the worship leader with information on whether the disciplines are changing their views in worship.

The spiritual disciplines are meant to build upon each other, and these disciplines are no different that pertain to worship. A goal to actively use the different disciplines in context with daily life is one that will be encouraged within the framework of the class. Regularly journaling about the use of specific disciplines will be encouraged throughout the class.

To gain insight into the effect of the spiritual disciplines on worship is the goal for this class, therefore being mindful of the outcomes that each discipline produces will be a major element determining effectiveness. This class is intended to arrange the conditions of one's spiritual life so that the conditions are correct to affect change upon the individual. Without these goals, it is impossible for the spiritual disciplines to have generous effect on the life of

everyone. Change happens slowly and the spiritual disciplines take time to be mastered and habitual. Each person must carefully take control of their own spiritual formation with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Implementation of Disciplines through the Eyes of Worship

There are two types of worship that will be addressed in the class. One is private worship of the individual within their own space of devotional practice. The second is the corporate worship in the confines of the church environment with others in the family of God. Dallas Willard provides clarity about worship, “The study of God in his Word and works open the way for the disciplines of worship and celebration. In worship we engage ourselves with, dwell upon, and express the greatness, beauty and goodness of God through thought and the use of words, rituals, and symbols. We do this alone as well as in union with God’s people. To worship is to see God as worthy, to ascribe great worth to him.”¹³⁹ It is important that we worship both privately and corporately while simultaneously using the disciplines to gain a broader understanding of God and a better connection in relationship with Christ Jesus. The disciplines not only enhance the field of worship but allow the relationship between God and human to grow exponentially.

It is often said that what is placed within the heart is related to the product that will be produced in the person’s life. This directly reflects the product that is produced in worship when the spiritual disciplines are involved. In building a spiritual foundation with the Holy Spirit, the individual widens the field of depth within the plane of worship. Jesus explains to the disciples

¹³⁹ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God changes Lives*, (New York: HarperOne Publishers), 1988, 177.0

his reason for speaking in parables. Those who seek to know God more will be shown more, and those who do not seek the Spirit of God will not. When the hearts of people are not right, then worship becomes a routine placed on a list to be checked off. In Matthew 13:10-15 we read,

And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” ¹¹ Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. ¹² For whoever has, to him *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. ¹³ Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says,

‘YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND;
YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;O
¹⁵ FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL,
WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR,
AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES,
OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES,
HEAR WITH THEIR EARS,
AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN,
AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.’

G.K. Beale explains this passage, “There is reason to believe that Israel in Jesus’ time was, indeed, guilty of idol worship—a different form of idol worship than in preceding generations. Israel of Jesus’ day was idolatrous because it had worshiped tradition in place of God and his living Word, and this is why Jesus applies the idol text of Isaiah 6:9-10 in Matthew 13 to the Jews of his generation. New forms of idolatry were developing in Jesus time.”¹⁴⁰ Equate this with the people of today, while there is not specific idol worship, there is a hardening of the heart toward worship that cannot be explained except through the lack of connection with the Spirit of God. Therefore, the spiritual disciplines act as a conduit that opens the heart of the believer and connects it directly with the Spirit of God. When these elements align, the shallowness of

¹⁴⁰ G.K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press), 2008, 166.

worship is dispelled, and the Spirit of God reveals His glory, majesty and Kingdom will for the believer in Christ.

Empowering the Leaders

A.W. Tozer said, “Whenever there is a move of the Holy Spirit, it is always a call for God’s people to be worshipers of the Highest God above everything else. Whatever else revival does it must restore the purpose and meaning of being a worshiper.”¹⁴¹ The goal in implementing the spiritual disciplines within the context of worship is to join the mind and spirit with the Spirit of God and activate worship in a meaningful way. For so many, worship is task that is endured so that we may secure a safe place in heaven when they die. Hopefully, that is not the case but if it is there is an escape; use the spiritual disciplines and revive personal and corporate worship in a manner not seen in this century.

Another goal of this class is to empower the group to share into their own sphere of influence the information they have learned about the spiritual disciplines and the revived connection they have with the Spirit of God. Job 33:4 speaks about the effects of the Spirit, “The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” Again, in Acts 4:31 when the spirit came at Pentecost, “And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness.” The prayer for these individuals is for the Spirit to fall on them as in the day of Pentecost becoming embolden to tell others about the connection between the disciplines of the spirit and worship.

¹⁴¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers), 2009, 30.

The God of all people wants to connect with His children in creative ways. He reaches out constantly in the world around us waiting for His children to notice His presence. It is the task of the believer to share what they have learned from the Spirit of God to strengthen those in the faith. When a connection with the Trinity is made, one cannot help but be emboldened to share about the truths of the spiritual disciplines.

Chapter 5

IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS WITH THE WORSHIP TEAM OF MVBC

The Scope of the Class

The organization of a Spiritual Disciplines class can be a daunting task for the simple reason that so many people have different ideas of spiritual formation. Spiritual Transformation grants the believer the opportunity to actively work out their own salvation. Thom Rainer in *Transformational Church* suggests that, “Transformation is at the heart of God’s mission to humanity. He delights in moving us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light-and then empowering and directing us as agents of His kingdom. And He has chosen the church as His instrument in this world. We, the body of Christ, are God’s chosen method to deliver the message of transformation to our neighbors both in the local community and around the world.”¹⁴² An inviting and safe environment must be created for the members to break down their walls. This class is unique at Monte Vista Baptist Church because there has never been one like it. No one understands what to expect, therefore selling the advantages of such a class has become a tricky endeavor.

The scope of the class provides important insight to the type of people involved with the development of the Spiritual Disciplines. These Disciplines contain the lifeline to the spirit of those who have chosen this class. The Sanctuary Choir, who houses all the worship leaders, was notified of the potential of this class. The choir consists of forty-five active members, of those fifteen members who lead in some capacity are in leadership in worship, choirs, or instrumental ensembles; seven agreed to accept the challenge to increase their knowledge of the Spiritual

¹⁴² Thom S. Rainer, Ed Stetzer, *Transformational Church*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group), 2010, 3.

Disciplines. The seven were gathered together and provided explanations of the content and purpose of the class. The class met every Wednesday and Sunday for twelve weeks for one hour and thirty minutes.

The seven who committed to this class were five women and two men. The ages of these people ranged from 42 – 60 years. A wide variety that covers an enormous gamut of varied backgrounds, denominations, experiences and musical abilities. These seven were provided with the Pre-Test and asked to bring it back to the interview session. All interviews were scheduled at the time the Pre-Test was provided.

The Sessions Description

Each session was one hour and thirty minutes. During the length of the twelve sessions we had a 100% attendance at each class. The first class was an ice breaking session. It consisted of various ice breaker techniques that directed conversation about the life of each person; their interests and hobbies. As a side note, many of the people already knew each other however, the ice breakers allowed for a fuller understanding of each other's lives. This part of the session was generally successful. The first session explained the requirements for the class and the assignments that would be required. In addition, it was mentioned that it was important for each member to finish the assignments to gain the full advantage of the class.

Each subsequent session began with a prayer for God's blessing on the class and to open our minds and hearts to the different ways we may connect with the Holy Spirit through the Spiritual Disciplines. At each session, thirty minutes was allocated to reflect on the assignment of the last session. Each person was given time to provide feedback on the spiritual discipline of the week.

The next thirty minutes was spent explaining the background of the Spiritual Discipline of the week while allowing time for questions about said discipline. This time varied on each end of the spectrum as sometimes the allotted time was not enough. The next thirty minutes was given to provide the class opportunities to use the spiritual discipline described or to make plans for the week to practice it; this was done together.

The second session of the week was treated as a check in time for each member. While the session was the same in every manner, a new discipline was not introduced until the week had ended. The second session varied in length.

Description of the Worship Leaders

The worship leaders that were involved in this class varied across the board of the Worship Ministry of MVBC. Each leader involved in the class plays an important role in the development of the Worship Ministry. MVBC places importance upon the role of the leaders of the church and therefore feels that time in training is essential in providing these leaders with the essential tools needed to effectively lead in their areas. The Worship Ministry is in alignment with this philosophy, therefore this class on Spiritual Disciplines is an important step in providing the leadership of the Worship Ministry with effective spiritual formation. The Worship Ministry believes that, “In partnership with God, we have the capacity to make a difference in this world. God has described our purifying and illuminating role: we can be “the salt of the earth. . . the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13-14).”¹⁴³ One of the goals for these leaders is to spread their knowledge to others as they become full of the Holy Spirit and deepen their walk.

¹⁴³ Jan Johnson, *When the Soul Listens: Finding Rest and Direction in Contemplative Prayer*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress), 2017, 132.

The following areas were represented in the class for the Worship Ministry: Instrumental Director, Children's Choir Director, Youth Praise Band Director, two praise team leaders, president of the Sanctuary Choir and one of the drummers in the Adult Praise Band. It is a sincere hope that these leaders can take what they learn and spread it throughout the Worship Ministry and beyond.

Outcomes from the Preparation Questionnaire

One of the purposes of the preparation questionnaire is to provide the worship leader with a list of spiritual disciplines that are essential to the Christian walk; helping them to know that life is a act of worship and all decisions must be based on conversations with God. Dietrich Bonhoeffer suggests, "For the Christian the only God-given realities are those he receives from Christ."¹⁴⁴ Therefore knowing where we stand on spiritual formation is an important part of learning the spiritual disciplines.

Each part of the preparation questionnaire (Appendix B) was designed to target each of the Spiritual Disciplines and how they are currently used in the leader's life. Twelve statements were selected for the class member to read and grade on a scale from 1-5 against how they see that statement as present in their life. A grade of one means that the statement is the least likely to be present in their life, while a grade of five determines that it is the most likely to present in their life.

The results of the preparation questionnaire were varied in response as some worship leaders were more in tune with their spiritual lives than others. The scoring system was as follows:

¹⁴⁴ Dietrich BonHoeffler, *The Cost of Discipleship*, (New York: Touchstone), 1959, 97.

50-60 points – There is a high knowledge of the spiritual disciplines and they are practiced consistently.

40-49 points – There is a good understanding of the spiritual disciplines and they are practiced regularly.

30-39 points – There is an average knowledge of some spiritual disciplines, but don't always practice them.

20-29 points – There is some knowledge of the spiritual disciplines and practice is limited to an essential few.

10-19 points – There is limited knowledge of spiritual disciplines and limited practice.

0 – 9 points – There is no knowledge of the spiritual disciplines or how to practice them.

Of the seven attendees in the class, three fell within the 10-19-point range while two fell in the 30-39-point ranges. The other two fell within the 0-9-point range. The range of knowledge in the spiritual disciplines appear to vary.

Problems of the Preparation Questionnaire

With all pre-tests, problems persist that were not considered in its creation, so applying some of the issues with this test to future classes will be helpful in obtaining a better outcome. There were three problems that became apparent following the administration of the questionnaire. First, it was too vague with not enough information about spiritual discipline. Second, it assumed that the participant understood spiritual formation. Third, it needed a place to allow for interaction with each statement.

The first problem that became apparent was the lack of information about the spiritual disciplines. Several made notations in the margin wondering about the statements and how to

interpret each one. The statements were originally simply crafted so that the worship leader would not overthink the situation given by each statement.

The second problem is related to the first problem. The questionnaire assumed that each worship leader had a simple working knowledge of spiritual formation. In hindsight, only two of the worship leaders had any knowledge on the importance of a regular spiritual routine. This contributes to the thought that many people come to church out of obligation or habit. They do not understand the relationship between Jesus and His children.

The third problem came about when a few of the leaders wanted to defend their response to the statements. The questionnaire did not allow for this type of response, although clearly across the board all participants desired the space to respond to each statement. Consequently, some of the worship leaders felt they were ill suited for the task to lead in the Worship Ministry.

A response to all these problems was addressed at the first meeting of the class. To alleviate any anxiety, a presentation of Spiritual Formations and its importance in the role of the Christian provided relief to those who felt discouraged by the test. This test was not intended to be an account of their actions in the spirit, but a representation of where they landed according to the selected spiritual disciplines.

Solutions to the Problems

While the problems that have occurred are not unsurmountable, there is a need to analyze the difficulties of the test and provide a better solution. The first problem simply was the lack of information on the spiritual disciplines so the worship leader could make an informed decision about the knowledge of them. Simply, an information sheet based on the selected spiritual

disciplines was available for the second class (Appendix D) that provided a simple explanation of each discipline.

The second problem is a larger problem that is the responsibility of the church. This problem cannot be fixed with a simple solution other than to bring the discussion to the church staff and approach the problem church wide. The age range of MVBC is from late thirties to late seventies, therefore the problem occurred before MVBC was involved in most of the lives of the worship leaders. Not all worship leaders were raised in this church, therefore it may be a universal problem. The solution is for the church to emphasize the importance of spiritual formation and the relationship with the Trinity that allows people to grow in the spirit. John 4:23-24 proclaims, “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” Believers cannot worship in spirit and truth if they are unaware of formations of the spirit and actively working out their salvation.

Interviews

An interview of each worship leader was conducted prior to the first class; The preparation questionnaire was graded, and the participants had the opportunity to discuss the statements at length, if desired. Some took advantage of this time to express disappointment in the questionnaire while others confirmed what it displayed. Each participant was asked a series of questions to determine their understanding of spiritual formation and the disciplines which the class would cover. The following questions were discussed:

1. How is your current relationship with Jesus?
2. Where could you improve?
3. Are you satisfied with your knowledge of scripture?
4. Could you defend your decision to follow Jesus?

5. What are your current relationships like?
6. Do you have difficulty forgiving those around you?
7. Are there extended times in your life where you spend meditating on spiritual things?
8. Do you desire a deeper relationship with God?
9. Is there anything that would prevent you from deepening your relationship with Jesus?
10. What would you like to obtain from learning these spiritual disciplines?

Although these questions were lengthy, they spurred conversations that otherwise would have not occurred. There were varying answers to most questions specifically with numbers four and ten consistently answered the same by all participants. The answer to number four was consistently NO, while the final question ten was a deeper relationship with Jesus. The lack of knowledge in spiritual formations can be cured if there is a willing spirit. All participants displayed this willing spirit. According to Edward Smither in his book *Augustine as Mentor* he states,

Augustine and the church fathers were deeply committed to sound doctrine based on the proper interpretation of the Scriptures. In America in particular, with the emphasis on market the church we are in the midst of a Bibleless Christianity. Will we allow an ever-changing culture and the uncertain foundation of its values determine how we lead the church and disciple believers? What about a revival of biblical and theological study among pastors and the laity? Could we envision training new believers as Augustine encouraged Deogratias to do in *On the Instruction of Beginners* – with passion, joy, and theological soundness?¹⁴⁵

The end discussion in every interview was that the Children of God must take responsibility for their own spiritual formation instead of waiting for the church to provide it for them. Every participant agreed with this philosophy, although this does not grant a free pass to the church. It is every church's responsibility to nurture spiritual formation.

¹⁴⁵ Edward L. Smither, *Augustine as Mentor: A Model for Preparing Spiritual Leaders*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing), 2008. 259.

Outcomes from the Class

In general, the results of the class were positive in that the members were made aware of the seriousness of spiritual growth in the life of the Christian. Each member was given a Post-Test that would provide feedback from the same areas as the Pre-Test with additional questions as an addendum to the test. The class was encouraged to be honest in their replies in hopes that the class could be improved for further members of the congregation.

Results of the Program Completion Questionnaire

As with the preparation questionnaire, the program completion questionnaire (See Appendix E) gave varied responses to the identical sections that were copied from the preparation questionnaire. In this area, all members show improvement in their daily routines except for two members who scores did not change dramatically. These worship leaders had already expressed that their knowledge of the Spiritual Disciplines was high, therefore the score did not change except in a few areas.

The extra questions added to the Post-Test were enlightening and helpful; the answers relayed will be resourceful for future classes. The answers to questions two and four; 'How likely will you be able to continue what was started in the class and how have the Spiritual Disciplines changed your view of worship' are of curious interest. Most of the answers to these two questions were the same in nature. Each participant expressed interest in continuing what had been started in the class with added concern on whether it would be possible without a guiding force. Each participant had different changes in their view of worship; and each expressed concern that this information was not available at the beginning of their walk with God. Due to the lack of guidance early in their path to salvation, the worship leaders felt

cheated; conversations were started to alleviate anxiety on this subject. Additionally, each participant expressed different views on worship through the eyes of these Spiritual Disciplines. The following statements are from the worship leaders and the changes expressed in their view of worship:

1. I have never felt the spirit in worship as I do when I am consistently in God's word and meditating upon it. I find myself excited to come to worship each Sunday in anticipation of what God will tell me.
2. Worship has become the center focus of my life, not only on Sundays but through my personal worship time as well. I am so excited that I have these disciplines; they enhance my worship more than I ever considered possible.
3. I have always wondered what was missing in my walk with Jesus and worship in general. I am amazed that in the scriptures God really does speak to us. Worship has become a time where I can connect with the Spirit of God.
4. I thought my walk with Jesus was complete; I have always had a devotion early in the mornings reading scripture and praying. When I began using the spiritual disciplines, it became apparent that there was a deeper area of worship that I had not experienced. After applying these principles, I realized that worship came alive and I was able to hear the prompting of God's Spirit easier.

The statements in this area expressed the same view throughout all seven worship leaders. All participants were encouraged to speak freely about their experiences and several provided suggestions to incorporate in future classes.

Changes in Habits

As the Spiritual Disciplines were introduced, the class discussed spiritual habits and the importance of creating new habits to sustain the Spiritual Disciplines. The participants were asked to build upon each discipline keeping in mind that not all disciplines could be done consistently all the time (e.g. fasting). Therefore, participants built their new spiritual journey upon the disciplines as they were introduced. The further they ventured into the class structure, the harder it became to continue keeping these disciplines woven into the fabric of their lives.

Spiritual formation is time consuming and must be done in a consistent manner to retrieve all the benefits from these disciplines. Richard A. Swenson, M.D. penned a book called *Margin* which speaks about “the space between our load and our limits. It (Margin) is the amount allowed beyond that which is needed. It is something held in reserve for contingencies or unanticipated situations. Margin is the gap between rest and exhaustion, the space between breathing freely and suffocating.”¹⁴⁶ It is margin that is missing in many of the lives in this class, therefore little time is left for spiritual formation. As the weeks continued, each participant gained experience with the Spiritual Disciplines realizing that it would take a strong commitment to find time to keep these integrated into their lives. According to John Jefferson Davis, “Too many Christians today,” he noted, “feel overscheduled, tense, frantic, preoccupied, fatigued, and starved for time. . . We are too active for the kind of reflection needed to sustain a life of love with God and others.”¹⁴⁷ This was true of these participants; for those who never had a devotional or worship time it was difficult to create. Additionally, the others found the spiritual disciplines overwhelming because of time restraints. Although the benefit outweighed the sacrifice, adjustments were difficult in the beginning.

Challenges in Change

Some of the challenges found within the context of the class came to the forefront when some participants found that their devotional time lead them out of shallow waters into a depth not experienced. In the words of John Jefferson Davis, “Good Sermons, while certainly of great

¹⁴⁶ Richard A. Swenson, M.D., *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress), 2004, 69.

¹⁴⁷ John Jefferson Davis, *Meditation and Communion with God: Contemplating Scripture in an Age of Distraction*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press), 2012, 3.

value, do not in themselves lead to the deeper encounters with God through the Scriptures that produce lasting personal transformations.”¹⁴⁸ This revelation became apparent to the worship leaders when they were enlightened in their own personal time with God, that God began to lead them into deeper waters than those around them. It was a thought that challenged the thinking of most participants. Guidance within the class provided wisdom when thoughts began to challenge the structure of worship as well as what the church had to offer. One thought that emerged from this discussion was perhaps God was preparing a work for some members through these disciplines that will help to deepen the structure and value of the programs at Monte Vista. This challenge was not taken lightly, and the Pastor was invited to join the group to provide insight on how a Christian’s personal walk can work hand in hand with the church. This proved to be a helpful resource.

Other challenges arose out of personal time management with family group. One of the elements that was discussed was that of time management. Time management is an invaluable tool when applied in the right circumstance with the right individual. Great care was given to provide appropriate resources for the leaders to help facilitate carving out time that would not interfere with family and work. One book by Matt Perman was introduced called *What’s Best Next*, an invaluable resource on time management. In this book he states, “We cannot be truly productive unless all our activity stems from love for God and the acknowledgement that he is sovereign over all our plans.”¹⁴⁹ For some it was accepted readily, while still others found it difficult to relinquish control over their time. It was expected that some challenges and questions

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 7.

¹⁴⁹ Matt Perman, *What’s Best Next: How the Gospel Transforms the Way You Get Things Done*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 2014, 13.

would arise. As with most spiritual matters, the Spirit of God would need to work on the hearts of individuals with the information that was given.

Spiritual Decisions

Spiritual decisions happen at every turn while following Jesus in a close relationship. In this context, we will be referring to decisions made during this class. In general, most of the participants came away feeling energized and spiritually charged. The question remains, will they continue this energy level and what decisions have been made that may impact their lives? The decisions that are done in secret are important to their right living which is apparent in the lives of worship leaders to the congregation. Jesus warns His followers that decisions done in secret are a blessing to God (Matthew 6). Praying, fasting, giving and serving are all gifts to God, but are most precious when done in secret.¹⁵⁰ So, these decisions made during the spiritual devotional time of these participants cannot be taken lightly.

One thing that became apparent was everyone is different and processes events that happen in their quiet time at different intervals. For some worship leaders, decisions to make a change in their lives came at a slow pace; for others the decision was quick. The participants made various decisions ranging from beginning a new ministry, letting go of extracurricular activities, creating time for spiritual formation, preparing for a new calling in the Kingdom of God, and simply redirecting their call as a worship leader. These decisions were impressed to these leaders by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual decisions as these must be received, processed and properly integrated into the leader's life.

¹⁵⁰ Matt Boswell, *Doxology & Theology: How the Gospel forms the Worship Leader*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group), 2013, 96.

Vetting the decisions made in the quiet place with God is as important as making the decision. It is important to analyze the request of the Holy Spirit to make sure it is from God and that gifts, talents and circumstances all coordinate. If all areas fall into place, then encouragement was given to the participant to continue with their decision. Appropriately, the class was encouraged to share spiritual questions, answers and decisions that rose out of their individual quiet times. Sharing with each other was an opportunity to see how God works in the lives of others affirming that He will do the same in them.

Spiritual Confusion

Many questions arose out of the Spiritual Disciplines; at times there was so much confusion that discouragement began to arise within the participants. It was difficult to dispel the confusion in the early classes; therefore, the scriptures were consulted. The evidence in the scriptures confirmed in their minds that the God who calls is not a God of confusion. The following scriptures helped alleviate confusion,

I Corinthians 14:33: for God is not *a God* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

Psalm 50:23: “He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me; And to him who orders *his way aright* I shall show the salvation of God.”

I Corinthians 2:12-13: Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.

These scriptures prove that God speaks to us in Godly wisdom and confusion may result because of our lack of spiritual understanding. We will not remain confused but must stay on the path

God has given and understanding will result. Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest* expounds on this subject,

There are times in spiritual life when there is confusion, and it is no way out to say that there ought not to be confusion. It is not a question of right and wrong, but a question of God taking you by a way which in the meantime you do not understand, and it is only by going through the confusion that you will get at what God wants.

The Shrouding of His Friendship. Luke 11:5–8. Jesus gave the illustration of the man who looked as if he did not care for his friend, and He said that that is how the Heavenly Father will appear to you at times. You will think He is an unkind friend, but remember He is not; the time will come when everything will be explained. There is a cloud on the friendship of the heart, and often even love itself has to wait in pain and tears for the blessing of fuller communion. When God looks completely shrouded, will you hang on in confidence in Him?

The Shadow on His Fatherhood. Luke 11:11–13. Jesus says there are times when your Father will appear as if He were an unnatural father, as if He were callous and indifferent, but remember He is not; I have told you—“Everyone that asketh receiveth.” If there is a shadow on the face of the Father just now, hang onto it that He will ultimately give His clear revealing and justify Himself in all that He permitted.

The Strangeness of His Faithfulness. Luke 18:1–8. “When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” Will He find the faith which banks on Him in spite of the confusion? Standoff in faith believing that what Jesus said is true, though in the meantime you do not understand what God is doing. He has bigger issues at stake than the particular things you ask.¹⁵¹

Confusion is a normal part of spiritual formation and is to be expected. Furthermore, God allows this confusion on occasion so that the believer can work through the situation knowing that God is powerful, mighty and knows what is best. The Spiritual Disciplines allows our connection with God and being human we must expect that there will always be questions.

¹⁵¹ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest: Selections for the Year* (Grand Rapids: Oswald Chambers Publications; Marshall Pickering), 1986, September 12.

Spiritual Awareness

Spiritual Awareness is a result of becoming spiritually connected with the Spirit of God. This level of awareness allows for the believer to discern God's spirit from satanic spirits. It is no secret that when God's people connect with Him Satan begin to attack. Therefore, Paul warns the church of Ephesus to keep their armor on to fight off these demonic forces. Ephesians 6:10-20 says,

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

One of the most disturbing matters that was addressed in this class was the spiritual battles that begin to ensue when one begins to connect with the Spirit of God. Without fail, each member experienced times of spiritual battles that would interfere with their quiet time, lead them astray to other tasks or simply played with their human emotions. By being spiritually aware of their circumstances and the amount of effort that is required to connect with the Spirit of God, they were able to thwart circumstances that lead them astray. Satan knows humanity and is aware

how fragile they can be and uses this fragility to his advantage. Only when the child of God is equally aware of their spirituality will they learn how to best fight their battle.

Each participant had difficulty when entering the spiritual realm as they began to work on a relationship with the Trinity. This reality proved to solidify in their minds that the spiritual world is a serious undertaking and must be approached with thoughtful awareness and spiritual fervor. A warning to the participants of this possible reality would have helped provide a way of ease into making the Spiritual Disciplines a part of their lives. Therefore, this will be added to future classes. For further reading and research, further resources (See Appendix F) was compiled and given to the class to provide encouragement to continue their study of the Spiritual Disciplines and their application in their lives.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

Spiritual Disciplines and Worship

If worship is a skill that must be applied to all of life, then it must be broken down into manageable parts so the believer can effectively navigate their way. The Spiritual Disciplines that were provided in this class provided the necessary elements to help the believer obtain a life of worship. God created worship not only for Himself, but for the humanity also. Worship takes the view of oneself out of focus and directly places it on a Holy Being that is more powerful and mighty than anything on earth. When one experiences this Holy God, their view changes from themselves to God. According to Geoffrey Wainwright, a professor of Systematic Theology at the Divinity School of Duke University, “Christians glorify God as they grow in conformity with his character. They themselves thereby become glorified. The glorious bodies hoped for in the final resurrection bespeak this ultimate realization of the human vocation. God will thereby be glorified because his intention will have been achieved. Communion with God, the transformation of the human character according to God’s own character: this is experienced as the enjoyment of God.”¹⁵² The Spiritual disciplines provide the tools needed to obtain this glorification. It pleases God when believers commune with Him and balance their lives so a relationship can be pursued. Worship is a direct result of using the spiritual disciplines toward the goal of a Godlier life. Donald Whitney states in his book, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*,

Then there is the catalyst of the Spiritual Disciplines. This catalyst differs from the first two in that when He uses the Disciplines, God works from the inside out. When He changes us through people and circumstances, the process

¹⁵² Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 1980, 19.

works from the outside in. The Spiritual Disciplines also differ from the other two methods of change in that God grants us a measure of choice regarding involvement with them. We often have little choice regarding the people and circumstances God brings into our lives, but we can decide, for example, whether we will read the Bible or fast today.¹⁵³

God uses the disciplines to affect change within the life of the believer, but the believer must choose to have a relationship with God. Through the disciplines they can make choices in how connected to God's Spirit they desire. Each person must decide for themselves how active the communion of God will be in their lives.

These disciplines provide a pathway for seeing the true God in private worship, as well as to corporate worship. God is gracious, kind and compassionate waiting patiently for the child of God to commune with His Spirit. Through this relationship God changes the views Christians have of worship slowly making them aware of His presence and the majesty of His presence. Therefore, when the spiritual disciplines are rightly aligned, worship becomes richer, deeper, vibrant and colorful, then the child of God begins to crave the presence and relationship with God. God created humankind to have a relationship with Him. Worship leaders have lost the focus to drive their spiritual development thus hindering the power of worship offered.

¹⁵³ Whitney,18.

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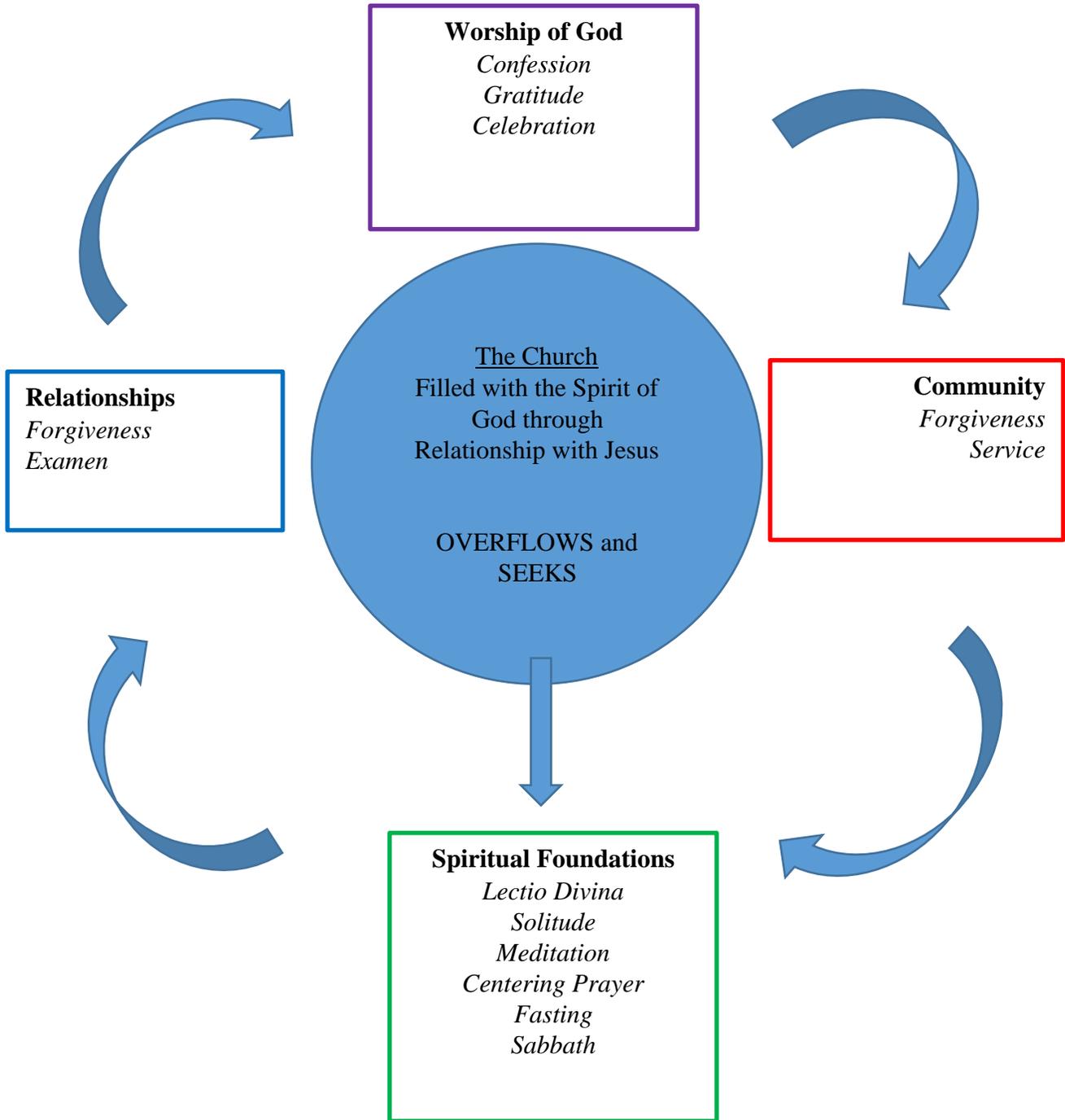
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APPENDIX A

Worship Flowchart for the Spiritual Disciplines



APPENDIX B

Spiritual Discipline Preparation Questionnaire

Directions: Please score each statement on a scale from 1 – 5. A score of 1 says that the statement relates least to you; a score of 5 says that the statement relates most to you.

1. ___ I take time to read the scriptures everyday to learn more about God.
2. ___ I spend time every week alone to connect with my own thoughts and God's.
3. ___ I take time to contemplate spiritual matters and listen to God's voice.
4. ___ I pray every day to God, focusing my thoughts directly on Him.
5. ___ I abstain from things occasionally that brings my attention away from spiritual matters.
6. ___ I take one day every week to retreat from work and take time to rest.
7. ___ I practice forgiveness for those around me and for their indiscretions because this is what Jesus asks me to do.
8. ___ I take time most days to contemplate my sins and the choices I make every week.
9. ___ I confess my sins to God everyday so that nothing stands between our relationship.
10. ___ I thank God everyday for all the blessings He has given in my life.
11. ___ I look forward to spending time praising God every week in private and corporately.
12. ___ I take time to correct injustices in my church and community.

Which of the following spiritual disciplines are you familiar with and have practiced?

___ Lectio Divina ___ Solitude ___ Meditation ___ Centering Prayer ___ Fasting
___ Sabbath ___ Examen ___ Confession ___ Gratitude ___ Celebration ___ Forgiveness
___ Service

APPENDIX C

SYLLABUS FOR SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES CLASS

Week One

Sunday: Spiritual Discipline – Lectio Divina

Assignments: Use Lectio Divina in your private time this week. Choose two passages which you will share with the class, provide feedback about your time and how it impacted your spiritual walk this week.

Wednesday: Practicing Lectio Divina Together; Sharing Results;

Week Two

Sunday: Spiritual Discipline – Solitude

Assignments: Take time to be alone with the Trinity through Solitude. Write down your thoughts each day after your time and be prepared to share with the group your findings.

Wednesday: Sharing Results of Solitude; Review Lectio Divina

Week Three

Sunday: Spiritual Discipline – Meditation

Assignments: Take time to meditate this week on the wonders of God. Write down your thoughts each day after your meditation and choose something to share with the class how this meditation has changed your perspective.

Wednesday: Guided Meditation Together; Share Results; Review the difference between Solitude and Meditation

Week Four

Sunday: Spiritual Discipline – Centering Prayer

Assignments: Take time to use Centering Prayer in your quiet time this week. You have several disciplines now to choose from for your time with God this week. Choose another one to use in conjunction with Centering Prayer. Be prepared to share your thoughts, and emotions as you exercised your spirit.

Wednesday: Guided Centering Prayer; Share Results;

Week Five

Sunday: Spiritual Discipline – Fasting

Assignments: Choose one or two meals on one day this week to fast. Don't forget to drink fluids as you fast. Take notes of your findings as you fast and be prepared to share these with the class.

Wednesday: Share Results of the fast this week;

Week Six

Sunday: Spiritual Discipline - Sabbath

Assignments: Since a Sabbath rest occurs weekly, we are not meeting on Wednesday to provide an opportunity to practice this discipline. Unplug and Reset your spirit on the day you choose to be your sabbath. Take notes of changes you noticed after the Sabbath. Were you energized afterwards? Did you feel more in tune with the Spirit? Be prepared to share.

Week Seven

Sunday: Spiritual Discipline – Confession

Assignments: Practice Confession daily during your quiet time or at moments during your day when things go awry. Take notes of your emotions and closeness to God during these times. Be prepared to share with the group.

Wednesday: Share Results of the Sabbath Rest and Confession. Did you notice any difference?

Week Eight

Sunday: Spiritual Discipline – Gratitude

Assignments: Practice Gratitude daily during your quiet time or at moments during your day when you feel especially thankful. Take note of your attitude throughout the day. Be prepared to share with the group. Write down your mood before and after you have a session of Gratitude.

Wednesday: Share results of Gratitude. What has Confession and Gratitude done for your daily walk?

Week Nine

Sunday: Spiritual Discipline – Celebration

Assignments: Celebrate each day in your quiet time. Tell God what wonderful things you see about His character. Sing a song, read a scripture from Psalms that glorifies Him. Shout to Him, Enjoy the time you have celebrating a loving and merciful God

Wednesday: Share the results of your celebrations. What type of celebration did you do to show God how wonderful He is?

Week Ten

Sunday: Spiritual Discipline – Forgiveness

Assignments: Forgiveness is one of the most difficult disciplines to achieve. This week look at those around you: Family, Friends, and Community and actively practice the discipline of forgiveness. What did you discover? Remember God forgave you so we must forgive others.

Wednesday: Sharing the discovery of Forgiveness.

Week Eleven

Sunday: Spiritual Discipline – Examen

Assignments: Examen looks at purposeful and non-purposeful acts the Christian does daily. Take time to write down things you have done. Look at your life and see what elements could be

changed for the glory of God the Father. What good could you do in the church, community, or family life?

Wednesday: Discussion of Examen; Sharing of what was discovered about this week.

Week Twelve

Sunday: Spiritual Discipline – Service

Assignments: Service is a spiritual discipline but not one that can be done in a quiet time. Look at your schedule and discover ways that you can provide service to those around you. Perhaps something in the community or at church might be a way for you to give in Service to God. Remember Service is a form of Worship. Be prepared to share how you will give in Service in the weeks to come.

Wednesday: Discuss Service opportunities and help members find ways to connect.

Week Thirteen

Sunday: Post Test; Complete Review of all the Spiritual Disciplines. What's next after this class?

APPENDIX D

Spiritual Disciplines Guide

Lectio Divina

Definition: Lectio Divina or hearing of Scripture requires an open, reflective, listening posture alert to the voice of God. This type of reading is aimed more at growing a relationship with God than gathering information about God.

Scripture Evidence: Hebrews 4:12-13

Practice includes prayerfully dwelling on a passage of Scripture; listening deeply God’s personal word to you; reading not to master the text but be mastered by it; staying with one text until the Lord prompts movement to another; reading for depth, not breadth; contemplative and formational reading of Scripture or other devotional texts.¹⁵⁴

Solitude

Definition: The practice of solitude involves scheduling enough uninterrupted time in a distraction-free environment that you experience isolation and are alone with God. Solitude is a “container discipline” for the practice of other spiritual disciplines.

Scripture Evidence: I Kings 19:11

Practice includes giving God time and space that is not in competition with social contact, noise or stimulation; taking a retreat; observing Sabbath refreshment by abstaining from constant interaction with others, information and activities.¹⁵⁵

Meditation

Definition: Meditation is a long, ardent gaze to God, his work and his Word. Slowing down and giving one’s undivided attention to God lies at the core of Christian meditation.

Scripture Evidence: Psalm 77:12; Psalm 19:14;

¹⁵⁴ Calhoun, 187.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 128.

Practice includes reading creation as “a most elegant book, wherein, all creatures great and small, are as so many characters leading us to see clearly the invisible things of God”; mulling over, chewing on and ruminating over God’s Word and its application; meditating on people; seeing them as God sees them and expressing delight in them as he does; paying attention to God with your body by slowing down, relaxing and breathing deeply; meditating on Jesu and on Scripture.¹⁵⁶

Centering Prayer

Definition: Centering prayer is a form of contemplative prayer where the pray-er seeks to quiet scattered thoughts and desires in the still center of Christ’s presence.

Scripture Evidence: Acts 17:28; Psalm 62:1;

Practice includes resting in and gazing on Christ; waiting before the Lord is open attentiveness; attending to the presence of the Holy Spirit within; taming scattered thoughts by attending to Christ through the use of a prayer word; releasing distractions into the hands of God and returning constantly to his presence within.¹⁵⁷

Fasting

Definition: A fast is the self-denial of normal necessities in order to intentionally attend to God in prayer. Bringing attachments and cravings to the surface opens a place for prayer. This physical awareness of emptiness is the reminder to turn to Jesus who alone can satisfy.

Scripture Evidence: Matthew 6:16-18

Practice includes abstaining from food, drink, shopping, desserts, chocolate and so on to intentionally be with God; abstaining from media: TV, radio, music, email, cell phones and computer; abstaining from habits or comforts: elevators, reading and sports in order to give God undivided attention; observing fast days and seasons of the church year; addressing excessive attachments or appetites and the entitlements behind them, and partnering with God for changed habits; repenting and waiting on God; seeking strength to persevere, obey and serve; overcoming addictions, compulsions, whims and cravings.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 191.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 235.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 245.

Sabbath

Definition: Sabbath is God’s gift of repetitive and regular rest. It is given for our delight and communion with God. Time for being in the midst of a life of doing particularly characterizes the sabbath.

Scripture Evidence: Hebrews 4:1; 9-11;

Practice includes setting aside time for intimacy with God and others you love; resting in God one day per week; practicing restful activities: walks, picnics, a Sunday afternoon nap, a phone visit with someone you love, tea or coffee with a friend, family time, games with your kids, love-making; letting go of things that stress you out for twenty-four hours; letting the difficult conversations happen another day; not developing a to-do list for Sunday; refraining from competition that moves you into a bad place.¹⁵⁹

Confession

Definition: Confession embraces Christ gift of forgiveness and restoration while setting us on the path to renewal and change.

Scripture Evidence: Psalm 139:23-24; Psalm 32:1-2;

Practice includes admitting to God the natural propensity to rationalize, deny, blame and self-obsess; replacing sin habits with healthy ones; seeking God’s grace to change; confessing sins by examining your life in light of the Scriptures.¹⁶⁰

Gratitude

Definition: Gratitude is a loving and thankful response toward God for his presence with us and within this world. Though “blessings” can move us into gratitude, it is not at the root of a thankful heart. Delight in God and his good will is the heartbeat of thankfulness.

Scripture Evidence: Psalm 136:1-2; Philippians 4:6;

Practice includes prayers and songs that focus on God’s generosity; gratefully giving and sharing all you are and have as a sign of your thankfulness to God; expressing gratitude to others; the habit of saying “thank you”, “I am so grateful,” “you are so kind,” and so forth; gratefully noticing God’s presence and gifts throughout the day; practicing an abundance

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 42.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 101.

mentality; counting the blessings of life; keeping a gratitude journal of the myriad gifts God has brought you.¹⁶¹

Celebration

Definition: Celebration is a way of engaging in actions that orient the spirit toward worship, praise and thanksgiving. Delighting in all the attentions and never-changing presence of the Trinity fuels celebration.

Scripture Evidence: Psalm 139:14;

Practice includes identifying and pursuing those things that bring the heart deep gladness and reveling in them before the Lord. This may include time spent with others, sharing meals, working, serving, worshiping, laughing, listening to music, dancing and so on.¹⁶²

Forgiveness

Definition: To forgive is to condemn a wrong, spare the wrongdoer hatred, revenge and self-righteous indignation by joining them to Jesus' own forgiving heart.

Scripture Evidence: Matthew 6:14-15; Ephesians 4:32;

Practice includes forgiving myself for my mistakes and limits as God has forgiven me; attaching my heart to God's forgiving heart and extending God's forgiveness when I can't extend my own; unhooking from hate and extending mercy to a wrongdoer; naming wrongdoing, for justice's sake, but asking for grace to see the wrongdoer apart from their actions; not tying forgiveness to another's admission of wrongdoing; discerning between forgiveness and collusion in perpetual abuse.¹⁶³

Examen

Definition: The examen is a practice for discerning the voice and activity of God within the flow of the day. It is a vehicle that creates deeper awareness of God-given desires in one's life.

Scripture Evidence: Philippians 1:9-10;

Practice includes a regular time of coming into the presence of God to ask two questions ; for what moment today am I most grateful? For what moment today am I least grateful? When did I give and receive the most love today? When did I give and receive the least love today? What

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 31.

¹⁶² Ibid, 28.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 212.

was the most life-giving part of my day? What was the most life-thwarting part of my day? When today did I have the deepest sense of connection with God, others and myself? When today did I have the least sense of connection? Where was I aware of living out of the fruit of the Spirit? Where was there an absence of the fruit of the Spirit?¹⁶⁴

Service

Definition: Service is a way of offering resources, time, treasure, influence and expertise for the care, protection, justice, and nurture of others. Acts of service give hands to the second greatest commandment: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Scripture Evidence: Isaiah 58:6-7; Matthew 22:37-39;

Practice includes walking the talk; being what you profess; doing service projects: Habitat for Humanity, mission trips, volunteerism, foster care prison ministry; mentoring, gifts of mercy and helps; using your influence to better the lives of others; using your gifts to build the kingdom of God.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 58.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 167.

APPENDIX E

Spiritual Discipline Program Completion Questionnaire

Directions: Please score each statement on a scale from 1 – 5. A score of 1 says that the statement relates least to you; a score of 5 says that the statement relates most to you.

1. ___ I take time to read the scriptures every day to learn more about God.
2. ___ I spend time every week alone to connect with my own thoughts and God's.
3. ___ I take time to contemplate spiritual matters and listen to God's voice.
4. ___ I pray every day to God, focusing my thoughts directly on Him.
5. ___ I abstain from things occasionally that brings my attention away from spiritual matters.
6. ___ I take one day every week to retreat from work and take time to rest.
7. ___ I practice forgiveness for those around me and for their indiscretions because this is what Jesus asks me to do.
8. ___ I take time most days to contemplate my sins and the choices I make every week.
9. ___ I confess my sins to God everyday so that nothing stands between our relationship.
10. ___ I thank God every day for all the blessings He has given in my life.
11. ___ I look forward to spending time praising God every week in private and corporately.
12. ___ I take time to correct injustices in my church and community.

Which of the following spiritual disciplines are you familiar with and have practiced?

___ Lectio Divina ___ Solitude ___ Meditation ___ Centering Prayer ___ Fasting
___ Sabbath ___ Examen ___ Confession ___ Gratitude ___ Celebration ___ Forgiveness
___ Service

Please answer the following questions regarding the class, *Worship and the Spiritual Disciplines*.

1. Do you feel you have a better grasp with the Spiritual Disciplines presented? Why?
2. How likely will you be able to continue what was started in the class?
3. Was the material presented in a manner that was easy to understand?
4. How has the Spiritual Disciplines changed your view of worship?
5. Would you recommend this class to others for the spiritual development?

APPENDIX F

Resources for Further Study

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