**Habits of the Heart**

**Lecture 6**

**John Parrish**

**Theme:** Spiritual Disciplines

**Review**

We discussed the big picture of spiritual formation. How does God change us? What does that process of transformation to which God is committed look like as well? We looked at the big picture and how the spiritual disciplines fit into that big picture of spiritual transformation.

Key Questions:

1. What is changing in us?
   1. Character
   2. Faith
2. What are the spiritual disciplines? – The things that Jesus practiced while in his earthly body that kept him connected to the Father.
3. What role does our body play in spiritual disciplines?
   1. We are embodied spirits who have the ability to act.
   2. Action is the basis of faith.

**Introduction**

In this session we will look at 13 different spiritual disciplines. There are many more than this, but we will look specifically at these 13 as means of being able to grow our souls. These are not just for information purposes, but also for transformation. Consider these means that take us to places of change in our lives.

I want you to be aware that you are “swimming upstream” as you study these spiritual disciplines. Any dead fish can swim downstream, but what you are doing is “swimming” against culture. You are going against the norm, against our default position as broken and sinful people. Be aware of three forces working against you during this process of studying the spiritual disciplines.

1. **Environment**
   1. *The Magic Kingdom of God: Christianity and Global Cultural Industries* by Michael Budde – He is a professor at Depaul University. He looks at global culture industries in respect to media and how media affects culture. He proposes that wherever you see Western culture you will find an erosion of Christian underpinnings and Christian environments. When looking at the media conglomerates, television, advertising, marketing, and entertainment, those undermine the impact of Christianity. They undermine Christian churches to be able to use the spiritual disciplines for the formation of Christians. You see this in industrialized countries all over the world. Budde says if you reflect back on the early church and consider the amount of time that they invested in growing their souls compared to what you see today, you will see a vast disparity there.
   2. Recent Nielsen Studies indicate that on an average anyone 2 years of age and above in Western culture particularly spends 34 hours a week watching television and other media related things. In addition to that, another 3 - 6 hours per week are spent watching taped programs. So just think about your consumption of time. That amount of time that is spent in media the early church used to spend growing their souls. Catechism, which is the memorizing of Scripture, and the propositions that used to remind someone of their position in Christ are being sucked away by time constraints and the things we give our souls to these days.
   3. When Paul was teaching in Acts and Eutychus fell out of the window, you can see their commitment to growing in Christ. Even the early hours of the morning were spent growing their souls. You don’t see that happening today, largely because of the environment in which we find ourselves.
2. **Understanding God’s Role vs. Our Role** – 3 Perspectives
   1. God does it all - A raft when out on the ocean is a passive vehicle. It is subject to the wind, the waves, and the currents. It goes wherever it is pushed. In this analogy I am the raft, passively letting God do everything in the process of spiritual formation. This is not the best perspective to hold.
   2. The motorboat is a high-powered boat. It takes charge; it takes command. It cuts through the waves. It doesn’t care about the wind. It doesn’t matter what the currents are. It pushes forward and makes it happen on its own. In this analogy I am the motorboat doing everything in the process of spiritual formation myself. I push through the hindrances, the resistance in my soul, myself. This too is a misunderstanding of the process; it is not fully up to us to make it happen.
   3. The most appropriate analogy of our role in the process of spiritual formation is that of a sailboat captain. In this perspective I am on a vessel and I need to use discernment. The captain knows which direction the wind is coming from. He knows the currents and where they are coming from. He knows if a storm is coming. The sailboat captain uses discernment about the environment around him and with that discernment he charts a course. He uses those vectors to arrive at his destination. Spiritual disciplines are like that. Jesus used spiritual disciplines to discern the will of the Father. The spiritual disciplines are means for us to discern the will of the Father and by guided by it.
3. **Legalism**
   1. The tendency of our own hearts is that as we study these spiritual disciplines, we become more like the motorboat. We want to make it happen on our own. With legalism we focus on the conduct level. In the last session we talked about three levels in which the Spirit of God works within us. The conduct level, our character, and our core beliefs. Our core beliefs inform our character which in tern informs our conduct. Legalism focuses on the rules and the efforts. The spiritual disciplines are good efforts, but in legalism the efforts become the goal and not the means to an end.
   2. Dallas Willard has a wonderful statement about this because there is a place for effort in the spiritual disciplines. “Grace is opposed to earning, but it is never opposed to effort.” When our efforts are attached to a belief that we have to earn our salvation, those are wrong efforts. But when our efforts are based upon grace and out of gratitude we do these things to be conformed to the image of Christ, those are appropriate efforts. But you have to be careful because that is a thin line to walk. As you walk that line, you need to allow grace to inform your efforts not legalism.
   3. Read Philippians 2:12-13**.** We are to discern the will of God and follow in his footsteps as we learn how to grow our souls through these spiritual disciplines.

*The Expulsive Power of a New Affection* by Thomas Chalmers – He was a puritan lived in the late 1700s – early 1800s. He was the most prolific pastor that Scotland ever had. He says that as we wrestle with sin, as we wrestle with the flesh, as we wrestle with the devil it is not a matter of simply giving up those habits, but those habits need to be replaced with other habits. It is far easier to replace an old habit pattern with a new habit pattern. A new affection is more successful in replacing an old affection than simply trying to end it. By setting forth another perspective, namely God, as more worthy of our attachment we can exchange the old affection for a new one.

Read Psalm 37:3-6. Trust in the Lord. Delight in the Lord. Replace the old affections with new affections. The spiritual disciplines help us to accomplish this.

**Spiritual Disciplines**

A. **Three Groups** - These are not compartments that are separated from one another, but they overlap one another. It is the combined effort that seeks to transform us.

\* Core Belief (This is a question that the disciplines seek to address) - What informs my soul as to what is good, and true and trustworthy in this life and the life to come?

1. **Reflective Disciplines** – must be used alongside Solitude and Silence
   1. **Reading Scripture** – This is the process of intentional exposing my mind and heart to the ways, desires, and delights of God, which are found in the Scriptures.
      1. Psalm 119, which is the longest chapter in the Bible, is about the delights of God’s law. It is about the Scripture itself and how the Scripture becomes our delight and how it transforms us.
      2. Passages that speak to the centrality of God’s word and its ability to transform us:
         1. Read Psalm 119:105
         2. Read Psalm 119:16
         3. Read Psalm 119:37
      3. God’s word transforms our affections. As we engage the word of God, it gives us a new set of affections. The Holy Sprit always accompanies the word of God. It is the Holy Sprit who is affecting those changes, but it is our responsibility to intentionally expose ourselves to God’s word on a regular basis.
      4. **Bibliology** – The Bible becomes an idol to us. Christians are said to be people of the book. The Spirit of God informs us by God’s word and as we read. Let’s not confuse the book with God. The book simply points us to God. We are not to adore and worship it. It always helps us to adore and worship God who is the author of it because all Scripture points us to God. It is a vehicle for understanding God’s work in different ways in our life. Let’s be informed by God’s word, but let’s not worship the book itself. It informs us of God and our relationship with him. We are always being informed by something and we want to be informed by the word of God. It should inform us, not the culture around us, as to what is good, what is true, and what is trustworthy in this life and the life to come.
      5. How do we use this particular discipline?
         1. **Read Broadly** - Broadly means to take a book of the Bible at a time. As we do that, we see the big themes and the flow of Scripture. We see the points that are being made. Take time to read broadly and see the big picture of how God is moving through the word of God.
         2. **Read Deeply** – Take 4 – 6 verses at a time. What jumps out at you? Is there a word that stands out to you? Is there a perspective that you need to explore more deeply? Use these times for reflection and deeper understanding.
         3. **Read Scripture Out Loud** – Until the 10th century all Scripture was read aloud. There wasn’t silent reading. The first instance that we come across silent reading is when St. Augustine encounters the Bishop Ambrose. He writes about it in his *Confessions* saying, “When he [Ambrose] read, his eyes scanned the page and his heart sought out the meaning, but his voice was silent and his tongue was still. We found him reading this in silence for he never read aloud.” The implication of this is that it was something unusual. Remember that there were not a lot of book in print during that time; so most Scripture reading was done as a corporate entity in a group. Someone read aloud to the group. As you read Scripture aloud, it helps to anchor itself in your soul. You engage your hearing along with your eyes and it helps you in the process of engaging in the word of God to become more settled in your soul.
         4. **Read Expecting to Hear from God**. In his book *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonheoffer says, “The word of Scripture should never stop sounding in your ears and working in you all day long, just as the words of someone you love. And just as you do not analyze the words of someone you love but accept them as they are said to you, accept the word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart as Mary did. This is all. Do not ask, ‘how shall I pass this on?’ but instead say, ‘what does it say to me?’ Then ponder this word long in your heart until it has gone right into you and taken possession of you.” So read the word of God as a love letter from God, as God informing our souls of his desires and delights for us. Scripture is not given to us for information, but for transformation. Scripture is meant to change us in our walk with God and our habits. Scripture is about intimacy with God. It is about developing a relationship and developing our souls with God. He desires to transform us through his word.
         5. **Lectio Divina** – **Latin for “Divine Reading”.** The early church fathers used this reflective approach. It teaches the Holy Sprit is our teacher with regards to the Scripture. The Holy Sprit informs us as we read the Scripture. It is the process of engaging our souls, our spirits in such a way that the Holy Spirit becomes our teacher as we read the word of God. I encourage you to look into this historic approach further if you are interested; you can find more information online.
         6. **Read Consistently** – Pick a particular time and place to read each day. Make this a consistent habit. Perhaps you will find a particular chair by the window where you can look out over your backyard while you read. Pick a place where you can be quiet and still before the Lord, without distractions. Perhaps you read at night or early in the morning, but make it a consistent time each day. Pick a translation of the word of God that informs your soul in a good way, one that you understand and does not become a distraction to you. The translation should help to clarify God’s word for you and become easy for you to read. I enjoy the “English Standard Version” of the Bible. The “New Living Translation” is also a good one. There are many other good ones. When studying, I prefer the “New American Standard Version”. That one is a literal translation, so it gives a word for word translation of the Scriptures, which is very helpful for studying.
         7. **Develop a doable reading plan**. What helps you accomplish reading the word of God? Let me suggest *The Daily Study Bible*. It is arranged in 365 daily readings in the “New International Version”. It lays out Scripture in chronological order, not necessarily the way the 66 books are usually organized in the Bible. In this way, you see the interchange of Scripture as it comes together. It really is helpful and gives insights and comments that help you to understand the context of what is happening as you read the Scripture.
      6. **Scripture Memory** – This discipline parallels that of Scripture Reading. **With this we are taking what is in the book and putting into our souls, hearts, and heads, so that it becomes a part of us.** In this way, wherever we are the word of God is available to us.
         1. Read Psalm 119:11.
         2. As I think about this, Cliff Barrows comes to mind. He is now 89 years old, but was Billy Graham’s song leader. Now Cliff is no longer able to see, but he still teaches. He has a wonderful winsomeness about him because over the years, even before he went blind, he was constantly memorizing Scripture and putting it into his heart and his head. And now that Scripture flows out of him. Even at 89, when he teaches he just draws upon the Scripture that has become part of him over the years. He teaches from memory. Memorizing God’s word formed his character. You can do this on your own simply by picking a particular passage of Scripture or a verse that stands out to you. Each week you can memorize a piece of Scripture and add it to that place in your heart.
         3. If you want a more intentional process, the Navigators have a topical system with a verse and a structure to memorizing it.
   2. **Meditation** – **This is intentionally filling our minds with the truths of God’s word, which the Holy Spirit, who is our teacher, uses to orient us towards God and his reality to apply to our daily reality.** Do not confuse this with Eastern forms of meditation, which seeks to empty our minds and souls, and in that emptiness we are filled. Scripture meditation is the exact opposite; we want to fill our minds with the word of God, so that the Spirit of God teaches us. In this we fill ourselves with God’s word rather than emptying ourselves.
      1. Examples from Scripture:
         1. Read Philippians 4:8
         2. Read Psalm 8 - The Psalms are examples of people meditating on God. As David looks up at the stars and thinking about God’s creation, he meditates on God and it informs his soul and his relationship with God.
         3. Genesis 24:63 – We see another picture of Isaac meditating. As a habit, Isaac walks in the fields before dusk. He spends time out in nature speaking to God. I remember when I was in college, on Lookout Mountain in Tennessee. I would go out at night and spend an hour before bed looking at the sky and having a conversation with God, meditating on him and the things he wanted me to know and to do.
         4. Psalm 27:4 – David talks about an ability to meditate in God’s presence in the temple, which is simply going to God’s house. As God’s word teaches us about himself, we grow in intimacy with him as well.
         5. Luke 15:7 - Someone once said that experience is the best teacher. Is that really true? Is experience the best teacher? Un-reflected experience teaches us nothing. It is only when we reflect upon experience that we actually get to learn from that experience. Think about the Prodigal Son from the Bible. When he was away from his father doing his own thing, he finally finds himself at the bottom of the pit in a pigpen. And “he came to his senses” by meditating on his condition and comes to the realization that life needs to change. Life would be better than it is if he were to go back home and repent. So he goes home to his father.
         6. “If you sow a thought, you reap an act. If you sow an act, you reap a habit. If you sow a habit, you read a character. If you sow a character, you reap a destiny.” **Meditation helps us to sow our thoughts in appropriate and Godly ways, so that as we sow our thoughts, our actions fall into place. As we sow our actions, we develop habits and our character. And as our character changes, our life changes as well.**
      2. How do we practice this discipline?
         1. What are you thinking about? **Meditation is about intentionally directing our thoughts towards God, towards intimacy with him and towards his presence.** Scripture helps prompt our thoughts, which is why it is important to us. Solitude and silence are required with this as well.
         2. What do we meditate upon?
            1. Focus on a piece of Scripture that helps to prompt your thinking in this way. Perhaps it will be a Psalm that resonates with your soul. Maybe you will pray the Lord’s Prayer aloud. It can be any passage of Scripture, which ministers to your soul.
            2. Perhaps you will focus on a particular character trait of God that speaks to your soul, such as his goodness, or his faithfulness, or his justice, or his mercy. Think deeply upon those.
            3. The purpose is to choose a verse of Scripture, think on it and let it sink deeply into your soul, so that truth sinks deeply into your soul. Then we are informed of its certainly by the Holy Spirit, who speaks to us.
   3. **Study** – **This is intentionally applying one’s mind to the acquisition of knowledge or understanding of God for the purpose of change.** We are applying knowledge so that it changes the core of our soul.
      1. Read Joshua 1:8 – As you think about the word of god, don’t think of it as a textbook to study, but as a word to obey. The word of God is not for information, but for our obedience. It informs our souls so that we trust God more fully and act accordingly.
      2. How do we practice this discipline?
         1. Teaching a Course - Personally, I need a compelling reason to study. I find that if I commit to something, such as teaching a class, it forces me to study the word of God.
         2. Make a List of Questions – These questions should help you in your studies. The questions could deal with forgiveness, grace, or the miracles of Jesus.
         3. Doctrine Study – Focus on particular doctrines that are derived from the truth of Scripture.
         4. Character Study – Look at an individual whom you highly admire. For example, if you look at David, you would find out what it means to be “a man after God’s own heart”. David failed, but he also loved God and was devoted to him. If you look at Ruth, you will see how God transformed her heart and provided for her.
         5. Identify a text and ask question – Follow your curiosity and ask questions. Visualize the pictures as you read. Pursue your curiosity as you study the word of God.
         6. Helper Questions – Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Ask the text those questions.
         7. Three Steps:
            1. Observation – As you read the Scripture, what are you seeing? What do you notice? What stands out to you?
            2. Interpretation – As you read Scripture, ask yourself what does this mean? What did this passage mean to the original hearer?
            3. Application – Bring the interpretation of what the text meant to the original hearer into your context today. How does that passage apply to you today? How does it inform your soul? How does it impact your daily life today?
         8. Wisdom Literature – Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes inform us in a broader reality and what God wants to teach us today. These books teach us wisdom.
            1. Example: Where would you go in the Bible to find out about anorexia? – A number of years ago, Karen Carpenter was a wonderful singer with a beautiful voice. She basically starved herself to death. That is what anorexia is. So how does the word of God inform us about anorexia? That word is not in the index in the back of the Bible. Look at the wisdom literature. Scripture has principles that inform us. But you can also find other passages in the Bible that can help inform you on the issues associated with anorexia. Why would people do that to themselves? What compels them in that way? How does a person become whole and cured from anorexia? How does God speak to that particular issue or problem?
            2. “All truth meets at the top” – All truth originates with God, so anywhere you find truth God is the source of it. If you find truth on the subject of anorexia, for example, outside the word of God, this too qualifies as Wisdom Literature. It informs us, but it has to align with the principles from God’s word.
            3. Medicine, Science, Astronomy, and Sociology can all inform us as a means of wisdom as long as the principles align with the truth of God’s word.
            4. Read Daniel 1:17. Other books may provide wisdom, but the Bible is the only book that is inspired by God. Read broadly and deeply as you study. Read the Bible and other books that bring wisdom and answers to the questions you have. Pick one particular issue at a time that is important to you and read deeply on that matter. Become an expert in that area.
            5. Example: I had a professor in seminary, Roger Nicole, who was an expert on the subject of atonement. Atonement is our understanding of how God saves men. He could talk about people from the early church fathers all the way to modern times, who all had ideas about how God saves men. He could pick a book off a shelf on the subject of atonement and direct you to a particular page that would inform you on the subject. He had a tremendous library, the world’s largest theological library. He studied broadly and deeply.
      3. What are some tools that will help you in this discipline?
         1. Sit under gifted teachers that will encourage you, give you different perspectives, and sharpen your studies.
         2. Build a library. You need sources that will help you with your studies. I find the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia very helpful. You can find any topic from the Bible in that resource. A concordance is also very helpful for word studies. There are also online resources that can help you as well. I use [www.studylight.org](http://www.studylight.org) for word studies, Scripture passage searches, and commentaries.
   4. **Journaling** – **This is the intentional reflection that utilizes writing to process conversations between God and yourself that provides insight into your conduct, character, and core motives for the purpose of change.** Journaling transforms your soul because it allows you to lay aside the pretences in your life.
      1. Read Jeremiah 30:2. The Bible is God’s journal to us. It is his letters to us for the purpose of helping us understand his dealings with mankind throughout time and history. His love for us is demonstrated through that. The Bible shows us his desires and his heart for us.
      2. Francis Bacon said, “Reading makes a full man, writing an exact man, and speaking a ready man”. Journaling adds clarity. When I journal, it helps me to sort out what is happening in my life. With journaling, we’re becoming more exacting because it brings clarity and produces transparency and authenticity. It helps you to address the hard questions that you are facing in your life. It helps you to explore doubts. It exposes your motives and core goals. It helps you make better decisions in relationships. All of this is in connection to God’s Spirit, who dwells in us. The Holy Spirit helps us to engage God through journaling, to hear his heart for us and understand that more appropriately.
      3. Types of Journaling:
         1. **Journaling Scripture** – Read a passage of Scripture and write out your understanding of that passage. It provides insight into God’s word, and helps us to apply God’s word to our lives.
         2. **Personal Journaling** – Reflecting on our experiences, meditating on them, and inviting God to speak into our lives through the Holy Spirit.
            1. Psalms is David’s journal of conversations with God. How wonderful that we are able to read David’s journal! We see his reflections as God interacts with him, his conflicts with Saul, his adultery, his confessions, injustices he experienced, worship and joy throughout his life. It is authentic.
      4. How do we practice this discipline?
         1. Larry Crabb says, “When journaling, begin with a red dot. If you were to go to a shopping mall in the United States that you had not been to before, you would ask yourself ‘How do I find my way around here?’ In order to get oriented, you would go to the Directory, which is a giant map of the shopping mall. On the Directory there is a red dot that says, “You Are Here”, which allows you to know where you are in the shopping mall. That is what journaling helps us to do. With journaling, we ask God the questions, “Where am I”, “What is in my soul”, “What am I feeling”, “What is happening to me right now”, “Am I angry, tired, joyful”, “What is my red dot”. As you ask these questions, you find clarity. Then you ask, “Where is God in all this” and “What does God want me to do”. Ask God to teach you through his Spirit. In your journaling, God informs you about the circumstances in your life. Journaling enhances personal reflection.
         2. In a book – For 32 years I have been using different empty books with lined pages to record my conversations with God.
         3. On the computer – These are private conversations with God, but you can also pass them along to your children. They can see that you have failed, but also how you loved God and they can learn from your journals.
2. **Disengaging Disciplines** – These are always in the context of community. They can be done privately, but have the greatest leverage when done with other people. And those other people help us to be transformed into Christ’s image as well.
   1. **Submission** – **This is the intentional choice to yield to another person decisions that affect my wellbeing, so that I surrender my self-protective habits to God’s protection as expressed through other people.** Submission is a voluntary act on our part where we yield to another person as an act of submission to Christ. It is not something we are forced to do. We are giving an offering, a sacrifice of worship to God. This assumes community. It addresses character issues, such as pride, arrogance, anger, control, selfishness and other core sins. Submission requires us to think of the good of the others before thinking of ourselves.
      1. Key Verses:
         1. Read Hebrews 13:17
         2. Read Philippians 2:3
         3. Read Ephesians 5:21
      2. Core Belief: **Can I give up my right to be right?** - If you are feeling that you always need to be correct, that you have to prevail, this is a good discipline for you because it deals with a demanding spirit that says ‘things must go my way’. If we submit to others having rule in our life, then God becomes our life. He is our provider and our resource. In this, there are times when submission is not voluntary, such as in work. The person with the highest authority will always win. Whether you are right or not doesn’t matter. God may use these situations to grow your character.
      3. How do we practice this discipline?
         1. Ask for Godly counsel – Submission is admitting that others may be wiser than you and asking for their advice. Basically you are saying there are others who are elders in wisdom and you are willing to learn from them.
         2. Submission in relationships – In this, we learn powerful lessons. Submission needs to occur even if the one you are submitting to takes you through a painful or difficult journey. Submission is even more difficult when we know pain will come our way. But that is part of God’s journey in learning to trust him with submission. Submission only needs to take place in instances of disagreement. In those times, God deals with pride in our lives, arrogance, and anger. It transforms our character as we submit to God.
            1. Wives to Husbands
            2. Children to Parents
            3. Men to God

Example: A woman was a having trouble submitting to her husband. She said the most challenging part of submission is when you disagree that a person, but you know you are right and you have to submit nonetheless. This woman learned that even though she could share her opinions with her husband, when he disagreed with her, she still needed to submit to his decisions. In those times when she felt strongly that she was right and her husband was making a bad decision, she would go to the Lord and say, “I don’t think my husband has thought this issue through all the way. There may be things he hasn’t considered. I think this might be painful for him.” She heard God say to her, “What if your husband needs to learn something that I want to teach him? What if the only way for him to learn this lesson is through a painful situation that comes about because of a bad decision he makes? Can you release that to me and trust me to teach your husband this lesson?” This woman was willing to submit to the Lord in this situation, but she knew that if her husband went through a painful situation, it would affect her too.

* 1. **Sabbath Rest** –**This is the intentional practice of ceasing to make life happen for 1 day out of 7 and letting God fill that gap.** In Western culture, this is a hard discipline to practice.
     1. Key Verses:
        1. Read Isaiah 58:13-14.
     2. Core Belief: **Can I live within the limits of my finiteness? Can I trust what God has for me? Can I trust God to take care of me or do I have to make it happen?**
        1. If we don’t yield to this, we will find our Sabbath rest through illness. God has a way of making us rest if we do not rest on a regular basis.
        2. Do you rest well?
        3. Listen to your soul. How does your soul respond to this concept of Sabbath? Does your soul long for a Sabbath? Sabbath simply means, “to cease”. Remember the passage in Scripture that says, “Be still and know that I am God”. In stillness we find God’s completeness, his ability to complete the longings of our soul. Our souls speak best to us about our need for rest.
           1. Example: I remember a time when I worked for 20 days straight. I was feeling exhausted. One morning I got into my car to go to work and as I reached for my seatbelt I saw a hummingbird fly by and land on a rosebush nearby. It was as if God sent him as a messenger to my soul. I had never seen a hummingbird rest before. They are always flapping their wings; they are very busy. But this hummingbird flew by and rested on this rosebush and I starred at him for about 3 minutes. I said, “Lord, that’s is what my soul needs. That is the longing of my heart. I need rest that is filled by you. Would you give me rest?”
        4. Loss of wonder – When I find that I can no longer appreciate the wonderful things in nature, such as a hummingbird or an ant, that speak to my soul about God’s provision for me, that is when I know that I need to rest. When I get so bus that I lose wonder, it is an indication that I need rest. Don’t let it get to the place where illness takes over and you have to rest whether you want to or not.
     3. How do we practice this discipline?
        1. What should I exclude? – Look to eliminate those things that activate your soul on the Sabbath:
           1. Activism – This is being always engaged, but not resting.

Work – eliminate your normal work routine from the Sabbath

Consumerism – eliminate the desire to buy/consume on the Sabbath

Worry – eliminate the things that cause you to worry on the Sabbath

To-Do List – do these things another day

* + - 1. What should I include? – Look to replace the above with things that replenish your soul:
         1. The difference between extroverts and introverts is what replenishes their souls.

Extroverts find their souls replenished by spending time with people.

Introverts find their souls replenished by spending time solitude and silence. They move away from people when their souls need to be replenished.

* + - * 1. Sleep – Sleep in on the Sabbath if sleep replenishes your soul.
        2. Walk

Example: We live about five minutes from Pisgah National Forest in Asheville, NC and I can walk out of my house and enjoy the trails of this forest. Walks replenish my soul.

* + - * 1. Worship – Experience the presence of God through corporate worship with other believers.
        2. Community – Enjoy the company of friends.
        3. Reflection – Spend some time journaling and reflecting with God.
        4. Prayer
        5. Scripture Reading
        6. Daily Rhythms – Include habits that replenish your soul in your daily routine.
        7. Weekly Rhythms – Include habits that replenish your soul in your weekly routine.

John Calvin wanted to teach this principle to the people of Geneva, so he had them pick one day out of the week to be their Sabbath. He did not want Sunday to be a superstitious day. They each picked a particular day to rest.

* + - * 1. Monthly Rhythms – Include habits that replenish your soul in your monthly schedule.

Jesus took time regularly to separate himself from other people, be silent, pray, and spend time with the Father.

* + - * 1. Quarterly Rhythms – Take a retreat 4 times a year, perhaps with your spouse.
        2. Annual Rhythm – Incorporate these habits into your life for a few days at a time each year.
      1. *Sacred Rhythms* by Ruth Haley Barton says, “The point of Sabbath is to honor the body’s need for rest, the spirit’s need for replenishment, and the soul’s need to take delight in God for God’s own sake. To fall in love with Sabbath, you have to try it.”
  1. **Confession – Confession is the intentional trusting of friends with our weaknesses and our failures so that our souls are nourished by God’s mercy and grace that is extended through them.** We find ourselves like Adam and Eve. When Eve takes the fruit, something changes in her. They find themselves naked and aware of it, and what do they do? They try to hide. We do the same thing when we sin. We hide; we try to protect ourselves. In the discipline of confession, these are laid aside and instead, we become transparent and vulnerable. We name the secrets, the sins, and the weaknesses that are in our souls. As we do so, we find they no longer have dominion over us. By confessing the secrets, we are released from them and from the power and control that they have in our lives. Confession helps us to avoid sin. **Nothing should master us, other than Christ.** 
     1. Key Verses:
        1. Read James 5:16.
        2. Read Proverbs 28:13
     2. Core Belief: I**f God and others really knew me, would I still be loved?**
        1. Read 1 John 1:9 – The truth is that confession leads to transformation, forgiveness, cleansing, and a pure soul.
        2. We also need to confess to one another because we live in community in which God expresses himself.
     3. How do we practice this discipline?
        1. Community – This helps us overcome the fear of man. God uses man to express his forgiveness to us. This community needs to be trustworthy, people who are committed to helping us.
        2. Transparency – This is the willingness to be real with others. What is our motivation for doing this? Be transparent with a select group of trusted people. But transparency does not invite those people into your life to change you. Transparency does not invite transformation or change.
           1. I have known people who have used transparency to engender themselves to others. They are seeking the approval and love of other people through transparency. For example I knew a man who shared some very secret things from his soul with me. Because of this, I thought he was brave. I was proud of him and thought highly of him for being transparent with me. Then a few minutes later I overheard him sharing the same thing with someone else. Why would he do that? Part of the reason is because transparency leads people to think better of you. Do not use transparency in this way.
        3. Vulnerability – In light of transparency, this is inviting someone to speak into your life in order for you to change. I become under that person, so that they speak into my soul for the purpose of change. Vulnerability invites someone else to be a part of the transformation process.
        4. Repentance – Confession leads to repentance. This may also involve restitution, making things right with others. This may entail sacrifice. We see this throughout Scripture.
        5. Key Question: Do I have relationships at the level of my struggles? Are there people with whom I can share my soul, my struggles? This is a daring and rewarding place in life. God ministers to us as we bare our souls with one another.
           1. Read Romans 4:7 – There is a joy and delight that comes with confession. It does not need to be something that we avoid or fear. When we overcome that fear, we experience the joy and delight of God’s presence.
  2. **Secrecy – This is intentional practice of not letting others know of our spiritual acts so that God is the only one who knows of these acts.** This particular discipline, when it is engaged, helps to address issues of pride and selfishness within our souls and character. Secrecy grows the character traits of love, humility, and generosity. All of these are core issues in our soul that God is seeking to transform. It helps us to gain freedom from the bondage of others’ opinions.
     1. Read Matthew 6:1-4
     2. Example: When you enter traditional American churches, sometimes you will see nameplates on the pews or the buildings. This signifies that person donated money to the church to build that building or buy those pews. I am not trying to belittle those gifts, but we do not see this discipline displayed in this scenario because those donations are being displayed for everyone in the church to appreciate these people publicly for what they have donated. But when our giving remains between God and us, God becomes our key audience.
     3. Core Belief: **Can I be at peace when not given credit for the good deed I’ve done?** How does your soul feel when you think of that? Can you give without receiving recognition for that generosity? If not, perhaps the applause of men overshadows the applause of God in your life. You should consider practicing this discipline.
     4. How do we practice this discipline?
        1. Secrecy is often connected to the spiritual discipline of service. Usually as we serve others, community is formed.
        2. But can you serve others without drawing attention to that generosity? Secrecy allows you to serve others while dealing with issues of pride in your heart.
        3. How can we ask God to help us with this?
           1. Ask God to expose you to the needs of other people. The needs of other people become opportunities to serve other people.
           2. Ask other people, “What is the greatest need in your heart right now?” Then go away and pray about how you can alleviate that need.
           3. Ask God and others what you can do to alleviate the needs of other people.
           4. Prayerfully consider what you can offer.
           5. Try to give sacrificially.
           6. Let your giving be done anonymously.
           7. Focus on the approval of God over the approval of men so your soul is released from needing that approval from others. Then your soul can enjoy God saying, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant.’

Example: George Muler lived in Bristol England in the 1800s. He had an incredible ministry to orphans. He never let his needs be known to others; he allowed God to be his provider. He knew that if his needs were met, it was because God provided for him because he never shared those needs with any other person. One day at breakfast time there was no food to feed the orphans. He calls all the children to sit around the table and they prayed for God to provide their food for breakfast. As soon as they finished praying, there came a knock at the door. It was a milk truck driver whose wagon had broken down right in front of the orphanage. He had no other way of transporting his milk, so he offered all the milk to George Muler. George Muler had an exemplary ability to trust God with his needs.

* + - * 1. All of this is practiced in community. In community, we should make other aware of our needs. Don’t eliminate prayer or faith. Let your needs be known before God and your community.
  1. Fasting – This is the voluntary act of abstaining from something for the purpose of self-discipline. This discipline addresses self-control within our character. Fasting allows us to depend on God. Through this we discover the resources of God when our self-control in tested. His resources are sufficient for us.
     1. Read Matthew 4:2 - Jesus practiced fasting in order to grow closer to the Father. He fasted for 40 days in the wilderness. The devil shows up and tests him. It causes Jesus to rely on the Father to help him in that struggle with the enemy.
     2. Read Daniel 1:12 – Daniel and his friends fasted with vegetables and water.
     3. Read Matthew 6:16-17
     4. Core Belief: **Is God alone sufficient for my happiness and contentment or do I find that I have an idol?**
     5. Types of Fasting
        1. Food – This addresses the sin of gluttony, which is where food becomes the comforter of our soul, so we overindulge to comfort ourselves through food. When we fast from food, we recognize God as our comforter, our provider, and our sustainer.
        2. Media – How many hours do you spend watching TV or engaging in media? Can you refrain from these things for a time? What would that do to your soul? What would happen to you if you removed these things from your life for a time? If you removed these things, what would it reveal about you? I find that technology leads to “activism” where my soul is always alert and ready to respond. This is the opposite of resting and focusing on the Lord.
           1. TV
           2. Internet – Do you spend too much time online? Do you find yourself addicted to it? Do you feel like you need to go online every day to check your email?
           3. Cell Phone – Do you need to have your mobile phone with you at all times in order to respond to calls and text messages?
     6. Example: There is a donut store near where I live called Krispy Kream. What if I were to walk into the donut shop and saw all the variety of donuts, but without any labels telling me about the various types of donuts. My favorite donuts have cream inside of them. If there were no labels, how would I know what was inside the donuts? You would need to take the donuts and squeeze them so that the filling comes out. This is an analogy for fasting. As we remove the things, which have become idols in our lives, our souls are squeezed and we see what is inside of us, what our character is like. God already knows what our character is like, but he wants us to be aware of it so that we can address it. God wants to address any areas of our character that do not honor him and transform those areas so that Jesus flows out of us.
     7. How do we practice this discipline?
        1. Food - fast for 24 hours – Let me suggest fasting from sundown to sundown. Consider asking others to join you in this process.
           1. Solemn Assemblies – where a nation fasted during a time of crisis.
        2. Corporate Prayer – ask those around you to join you in prayer as you fast together.
        3. Fasting is a Tool – created to bring us into a closer relationship with him. As you fast, you can engage in other disciplines as well. Meditation, journaling, and prayer, for example, can accompany fasting. Without these other disciplines, fasting is just dieting. Fasting becomes an amplifier for the voice of God. As we practice fasting with other disciplines, we hear God’s voice more clearly. How hungry am I for God? Is my soul hungry enough for God that I’m willing to do this in order to connect with God?
        4. *God’s Chosen Fast* by Arthur Wallis is an excellent reference that would help you engage the tool of fasting.

1. **Attitude-Shaping Disciplines –** These help to grow our attitudes in Christ-likeness
   1. **Faith – This is the intentional seeking and acting upon an informed word from God that takes us outside our comfort zone and beyond our natural abilities to which God demonstrates his faithfulness, capability, and sufficiency.** When God is transforming us in Christ-likeness, he is shaping our character and our faith. God is seeking to develop our faith so that we have a greater dependence upon Him. That is God’s goal in these spiritual disciplines.
      1. How do we practice this discipline?
         1. Read Romans 1:17 – Faith is not a one-time thing, but a series of experiences that are grown in us. These experiences come from spending time with God.
         2. These steps of faith will always involve a step outside our comfort zone. A comfort zone is where we feel emotionally, physically, or spiritually comfortable. You will be doing this intentionally so that God informs you along the way.
         3. Accompany Faith with other disciplines such as Scripture reading and prayer.
         4. The Holy Spirit will speak to your soul as you step out in faith.
         5. Expose yourself to the needs of others. Pay attention to the needs that become burdens. Listen to God’s voice. Trust God to provide the resources for that burden.
         6. Pay attention to that which becomes a conviction to your soul. If you didn’t respond to this prompting, you would be disobeying God. Follow through with it. If you don’t know how to follow through, use it as an opportunity to develop your faith.
            1. Example – Before my wife and I came to The Cove a few years ago, we didn’t know how we could do it. We didn’t have enough money, we would be moving away from family, and it took us out of our comfort zone, but we felt so compelled by God to move. If we hadn’t moved to The Cove, we would have been disobeying God. We did move and we have seen God’s grace and provision in our lives. We moved as a step of faith.
      2. Core Belief – **Can I attempt something for God that is doomed to failure unless God is in it?** Unless God comes through in this experience I will not be able to do what I set out to do, but I trust him for the sufficiency of it. Am I trusting God for what is beyond my own ability, beyond my own resources?
         1. Example – I am on the board with a woman here in Asheville named Emily Fitzpatrick. Emily has a wonderful heart that God has transformed. She has a broken background; she was involved in drugs and promiscuity. God transformed her life. God usually uses the places where we were broken in our past as a ministry and an encouragement to others. Emily now has compassion for broken women. Her first step towards this ministry happened when she became aware of a strip club down the road from where she lives. She asked God “How can I minister to these women who are working at the strip club?” She came up the idea of bringing gifts to these women on Mother’s Day. Some of these women are mothers and they are promiscuous because it is a profitable way of making money while giving them a lot of time at home as well. Emily made these gifts and placed a card inside each one that said, “Someone is thinking of you and praying for you. If I can be of any help to you, give me a call.” And she placed her name and number in the card. Several ladies called her and asked what compelled her to do this. Most people see these women as dirty. Through this, Emily developed a ministry to women in strip clubs, and later women involved in the sex trafficking industry in America as well. She started a shelter home for these women, which takes them away from these situations, and gives them a safe place for their souls to grow and come to know Jesus as their sufficiency. **This is a ministry of faith** because at every step Emily has prayed and trusted God to provide. Recently a property has become available for Emily to purchase for this shelter. And a nearby church has designated one Sunday each month to collect an offering of money for Emily’s ministry. This church provided $300,000 to purchase this property for the shelter to provide a safe place for these women who are involved in sex trafficking. All of this is because God placed this burden on Emily’s heart and provided the faith for her to step out; God provided everything she needed.
   2. **Gratitude** – **This is the explicit effort to acknowledge that all I am and all I have is given to me as a gift from God’s presence, a gift to be celebrated with joy.** If you find yourself lacking in joy, this is a wonderful discipline for you to practice.
      1. Exercise – Take out a piece of paper and a pen/pencil. Make a list of things you’re grateful for. Reflect upon the things you are thankful for in your life. Take 5-10 minutes to think about this right now.
         1. How did you feel in your spirit as you formed this list? As you focused on the things God provided, did you feel a change in your spirit?
         2. I think you found yourself becoming more grateful through this exercise. As you saw God’s provision in your life, thankfulness grew in your heart.
      2. Key Scripture:
         1. Read Romans 1:21 – This helps us to understand the role of thankfulness in our lives. Ungrateful people do not understand how vast God is. Gratitude helps to enlarge your perspective and understanding of God.
         2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
      3. Core Belief – **What shapes my expectations? Can I rid myself of expectations so that I see everything in life as a gift from God?** What happens when I rid myself of expectations? Everything that happens to me, everything I have, everything I am is an unexpected gift from God. I realize that God is my provider. I begin to thank God for trusting me with the things he has given me each day. When you practice this discipline, you find yourself giving thanks in all circumstances because God has entrusted you with whatever you’re experiencing at that time, so that whatever happens is a gift from God that entices me to worship Him. It’s not about what I think I need, but what God has given me that he says is sufficient for me.
         1. Who defines my needs? – God defines what we needs and provides for us.
      4. How do we practice this discipline?
         1. Historical Examples:
            1. Read Acts 16:25 – Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned, but **they still sang praises and thanked God.**
            2. In the days of Emperor Nero, Christians were taken and placed in his courtyard and burned alive. Many of these martyrs sang praises to God as they were burning, just like Paul and Silas. **They were focusing on God’s sufficiency and his presence in their lives.** Nero went insane and some say it was because he couldn’t understand why these Christians would sing songs of gratitude as they were dying.
            3. *The Hiding Place* by Corrie Ten Boom is a book about Corrie and her sister during World War II. These girls were in the Nazi concentration camps. These camps were filled with lice and fleas that were constantly biting the girls. Corrie’s sister complained about their circumstances and wondered how God could be with them during that time. Corrie, with a spirit of gratitude said, “These are God’s provisions for us right now. The lice and fleas keep the German guards outside and us safe inside this building. Corrie saw those hard circumstances God’s deliverance as a means of deliverance and safety. Corrie Ten Boon was a light in that dark place. **Gratitude beyond our ability becomes an evangelistic message to others; it becomes a statement of the Gospel.** Gratitude like that is not natural; it is supernatural. When we refrain from grumbling and complaining, we become like stars in the night sky. We stand out and people take notice.
            4. Luke 17 – Jesus healed the 10 leapers, but only 1 of them came back to thank him. **This attitude of thankfulness is not common.**
         2. Prayer
         3. Singing Songs of Praise
         4. Meditate – I go outside at night and look at the stars and sing a song that expresses my gratitude towards God.
         5. Gratefully Share with others – This is a sign of your thankfulness to God and your trust in him.
         6. Thank Others – Practice this as part of your routine. Thank other people for their presence, for their encouragement, for their friendship, for their service.
         7. Count Your Blessings – This is how we began discussing this discipline. Start a gratitude journal. As you go through your day, take note of what God has blessed you with. Keep track of all the blessings God has given you on a daily basis.
         8. Write a Letter of Thanks – Thank someone for the contribution they made to your life.
   3. **Generosity – This is intentional act of separating ourselves from something of value so that another person benefits, and God imparts something of greater value to us.** Generosity is an attitude of the heart. It doesn’t depend on our doing. It doesn’t depend on having plenty. And it doesn’t depend on being wealthy or being poor. I have known poor people who have been generous and I’ve known wealthy people who have been stingy. **You can be generous whether you are wealthy or poor.** When you give, you express your love. First, you are expressing the love you have received from God.Love expresses itself in generosity towards other people. Generosity is not always about giving money. You can give clothing, food, books, time, good quality items, or even of yourself.
      1. Key Scripture:
         1. Read 1 Timothy 6:18
         2. Read Acts 20:35
         3. Read Acts 2 - Whenever God’s Spirit is active, God’s people are generous. Whenever there was a need, the early church gave freely of themselves and of their possessions and shared freely.
         4. Psalm 50:10 – God owns everything. Generosity is a matter of stewardship. He may be providing something to me so that I pass it along to someone else who has a need. God has given us everything we possess. We are simply stewards of what we have.
      2. Core Belief – **Do I believe God is a generous God? Or do I see God as a stingy God, someone who withholds when he could bless? Do I really trust God to be a good God?** 
         1. Can money and resources pass through me and not stick to me? – This means that money doesn’t attach itself to my heart; rather it is an instrument to bless others.
         2. Martin Luther said there were Two Baptisms: the baptism of water, and the baptism of the wallet. This is a matter of God changing our hearts so that we see all our money and all that we have as belong to Him and we give it freely.
         3. Am I all in? A generous heart says, “I’m all in because everything I have is not mine, but available for God to use and pass on to others”.
      3. How do we practice this discipline?
         1. If you are NOT generous when you have nothing, you will NOT be generous when you have everything – Do not wait in practicing this discipline. Make generosity a priority in your life. It begins with what you have, not with what you hope to have.
         2. First Fruits – Give the first and best of what God has given you. It is easier to give right when you receive rather than after you have spent most of what you have and there is only a little left.
            1. Tithe – give a tenth of what you have
            2. Generous Offering - Give above and beyond your tithe. Look at the needs around you and give based on those needs.
         3. Read Your Bible & Pray – When you spend time with God, he will show you how to be generous with others.
         4. Look Around Your House – If there is something you haven’t used over the past year, such as clothes, give it away.
         5. Give Your Time
            1. Tim Keller says, “Living is giving. We live life best when we give ourselves, our resources, or competencies, our time, and service to others and support of God’s mission. If you spend your money on only yourself, you’re just surviving. If you want your life to count, if you really want to live, give.”

B. **Rule of Life** – **This is the discipline of intentionally arranging life, so that you pursue the presence of Jesus throughout your day and throughout your life.** **These are holy habits that help me connect with God’s presence as I incorporate them into my life on a daily basis.** These habits deal with areas of my life where I find joy. These habits also deal with sin patterns in my life, helping me to overcome those sin patterns more effectively. A rule of life is a shortcut that takes you to a resource that helps you. It is a practice throughout your day that connects you to the reality of God’s presence.

1. Biblical & Historical Examples:

a. Read Daniel 1:8 – Daniel was practicing a form of fasting in this passage. He was only eating vegetables and water. When he practiced this discipline, that meal connected him with God’s provision for him and God’s sufficiency in his life.

b. Read Daniel 6:10 – So we see a habit pattern in Daniel’s life. Even though there was the threat of death, he prayed intentionally to bring him into the presence of God. Three times a day, he sequestered himself and connected his soul with God.

c. Philip of Macedon – He was the father of Alexander the Great. He had one of his servants come before him each day and say to him, “Philip, you will die.” This reminded him that his life was short. You could say to God, “I acknowledge that today is another day that you have given me. Life is short.” That would bring you into the presence of God and help you develop that habit of recognizing your life is finite.

d. St. Benedict – He developed a community around this Rule of Life principle. The rules of their community were prayer, study, and work. They submitted themselves to these habits and attitudes in order to produce Godly character. The byproduct of that is connecting one’s soul to God.

2. How do we practice this discipline?

a. **Read Scripture** – Do this as the first act of your day, or the last act of your day, or both.

b. **Pray First** – Before you get out of bed, say to God, “I begin my day in your presence. And I trust that everything that happens today comes from you. You are sufficient. You will bring to me the opportunities, the resources, and the people that you want me to be involved with today. May your presence guide me in all I do.”

c. **Select Spiritual Disciplines** – Choose the ones that help you do the following:

a. Enjoy the presence of God – Choose the disciplines to practice in your life that makes you aware of God’s presence in your life.

b. Help you to develop patterns – Choose the disciplines to practice that overcome the habits of sin in your life. This means replacing old habits with new habits.

3. Core Belief – **Am I willing to arrange my life for what my heart wants most? How do I want to live so that I become what I want to become?** The rule of life is about arranging our life for the deeper longings of our souls.

**Assignment**:

A. Ask God, “What Spiritual disciplines should I consider incorporating into my life that will help me to connect with you?”

B. Select one of the spiritual disciplines listed above. Practice it over the next 7 days.

C. Post a comment about the discipline you chose and what happened to you as you practiced that discipline.

D. Print the file associated with this lecture. You will see that the file has three columns with the following headings:

1. Sin Patterns – What are the areas of sin in your life that you want to overcome?

2. Disciplines – Choose the disciplines you wish to incorporate into your life and write them here.

3. Character Trait – What character trait will each discipline produce in your life? Write down the character traits you have seen develop in your own life after practicing these disciplines.