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# Developing Dynamic Spiritual Disciplines

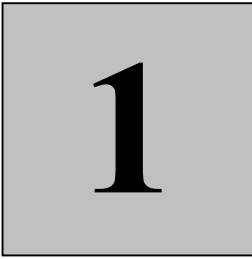
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## Course Objectives:

1. To establish and reinforce the importance of developing regular and dynamic spiritual disciplines in order to sustain a fruitful walk as a disciple of Christ.
  - *Dynamic spiritual disciplines are essential to sustain a fruitful walk as a disciple of Christ.*
2. To understand that the purpose of spiritual disciplines, being:
  - a. To draw us closer to Christ
  - b. To develop maturity in Christ
  - c. To strengthen the spiritual man
  - *Spiritual disciplines empower disciples to “walk in the truth”.*
3. To understand the role and work of the Holy Spirit in bearing the fruit of self-discipline, so that it does not become a “dead work” of the flesh.
  - *The Holy Spirit empowers us to cultivate the fruit of self-control*
4. To help the student develop good biblical habits in the following specific spiritual disciplines: The Word; Fellowship; Communion; Stewardship & tithing; Worship; Fasting; The Sabbath (Note that cover the discipline of Prayer in our Effective Prayer subject.)
  - *Destiny is determined by daily discipline*

## Course and session Outline

1. The call to a disciplined life
2. The discipline of daily devotions
3. The discipline of Fellowship
4. The discipline of Communion
5. The discipline of Fasting
6. The discipline of Worship
7. The discipline of Stewardship & Tithing
8. The discipline of the Sabbath



**Discipline defined:**

**dis•ci•pline** - verb (used with object)

- to train by instruction and exercise
- to bring to a state of order and obedience by training and control

**dis•ci•pline** - noun

- Activity, exercise, or a regimen that develops or improves a skill; training

Discipline marked the early church from its inception. Acts 2:42

- NIV        *“They devoted themselves to...”*
- NKJ        *“And they continued steadfastly...”*
- TM:        *“They committed themselves to...”*
- AMPL:     *“And they steadfastly persevered, devoting themselves constantly to...”*

**Exercise:** Read through the description of the early church in Acts 2:42–47, and underline/circle and name the spiritual disciplines/routines which marked their church life:

<sup>42</sup>*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.* <sup>43</sup>*Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.* <sup>44</sup>*All the believers were together and had everything in common.* <sup>45</sup>*Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.* <sup>46</sup>*Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,* <sup>47</sup>*praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

**Notice the amazing results of such a life:**

*And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Vs. 47)*

### Further “spiritual exercise plan” scriptures:

**1 Tim 4:7-9** ...<sup>7</sup>train yourself to be godly. [keeping yourself spiritually fit]. <sup>8</sup>For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. <sup>9</sup>This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance

In The Message this reads: *Exercise daily in God—no spiritual flabbiness, please! Workouts in the gymnasium are useful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so, making you fit both today and forever. You can count on this. Take it to heart.*

**2 Tim 1:6,7** ...I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. <sup>7</sup>For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

**Ps 94:12-13** Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law; <sup>13</sup>you grant him relief from days of trouble,

**Pro 1: 7** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

**Titus 1:7-9** Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. <sup>9</sup>Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined...

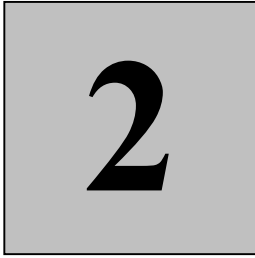
### NOTE:

*“There is a difference between results-focused and God-focused spiritual practices. Results are always a secondary, indirect concern in their healthy practice. Primary is our attentiveness to God Himself.”*

### PERSONAL ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

From the list below, and considering your current diary, habits, routines, etc, mark with numbers 1, 2 & 3 the top 3 spiritual disciplines which you feel need the most development / attention in your life at this time:

- ..... Fellowship (meeting together regularly in authentic Christian community)
- ..... Communion (Remembering what Christ has done)
- ..... Daily devotions in the Word (reading, meditating, study, confession, memorising, etc)
- ..... Daily devotions in prayer (prayer for personal needs and others, etc)
- ..... Worship (A lifestyle of worship and praise)
- ..... Stewardship (Availing your time, talents & treasures for Gods Kingdom)
- ..... Tithing (Honouring God with His tithe)
- ..... Fasting (Going without in order to draw near.)
- ..... The Sabbath (Resting from doing.)



## DEVELOPING THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF DYNAMIC DAILY DEVOTIONS IN PRAYER & THE WORD

### Objectives of this session:

To share truth and practical tips to help the believer develop the discipline of daily devotions in prayer and in the Word.

“The Gospel brings man to God; Devotions keep him close to God”

This session reminds us that we need a one-on-one relationship with God. While it's good to learn from others, Jesus calls us to follow Him (not just follow others who are following Him).

### Defining Devotions

Personal daily devotions can be defined as: “Some quality time every day dedicated to meeting with God, listening to Him and talking to Him, resulting in becoming more like him...”

- Devotions require quality time and communication.
- God communicates to His people through His Word, and we communicate with Him through prayer.

### Devotion is more than “commitment.” Devotion is birthed out of DESIRE + DISCIPLINE

#### DESIRE is about heart

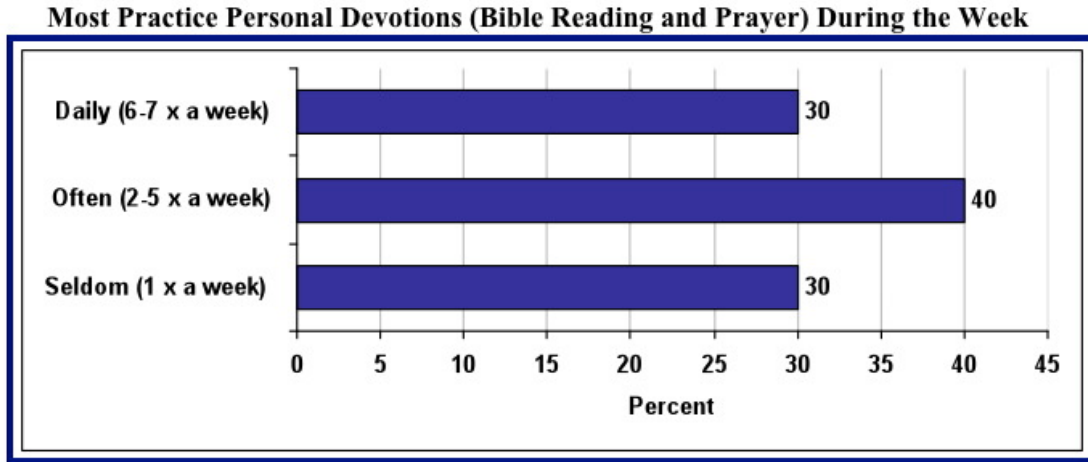
- Desire is a much stronger motivator than duty. “I want” vs. “I must.”
- I'm devoted out of a devotion to .....
- The Christian life is not about head – what you know.
  - ❖ Its not just about doing – what you do
  - ❖ Its not defined by what you decided – I believed
  - ❖ Its about who you know and are devoted to. It's about a growing deepening relationship with God the Father, son and Holy Spirit.
- To follow Jesus requires more than simply believing – it requires you to hear his voice. Jesus said that My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me.
- Its one thing to believe, it's another to follow.
- To hear his voice you have to make space. You must come to Him. Draw near. Receive fresh manna daily. Don't live on yesterday's manna.

#### DISCIPLINE is about action

- “Discipline gets you to do what you don't want to do in order to achieve what you want to achieve”
- There is no discipleship without discipline. In fact, there is very little success in anything in life without discipline
- A disciple is compared to an athlete, soldier, farmer. They are all disciplined.
- Discipline requires repetition:
  - ❖ What you repeat will determine what you reap
  - ❖ What you reap will be determined by what you repeat regularly

**Evaluate your current daily devotions:**

Below are the results of a survey done in 12 large churches in America, asking about the daily devotional habits of believers:



**Seven important ingredients for dynamic devotions:**

1. Desire
2. Time – When? How long?
3. Place – where?
4. Steps – from alarm to devotion...
5. Bible
6. Tools
  - a. A Journal
  - b. A Pen
  - c. A To do list
  - d. A Notebook
7. Pattern

**We will now look at each of these in detail below:**

1. Decide it's important. How important? How about as important as food.

Jesus in Matthew 4:4 *“Man will not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”*

Note how man is dependent every day for God's Word. Do you believe this? If you believe it, then you will not go a day without deeply drinking God's Word into your spiritual life.

2. Find the best time.
  - For many, the best time is in the morning. For others its during a lunch break, or in the evening.

What is the best time for you:

How long should my devotion time be? As long as it takes.

- Start realistic. Don't go from zero to an hour. Rather run out of time.
- Plan to start with 15.
- Jesus: Could you not wait with me one hour?
- People are different.

### 3. Place – Where?

*Mark 1:35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*

*Matt 6:5-6 And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. <sup>6</sup>But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

### 4. Steps to devotion... planning your habit...

- Failing to plan is planning to fail
- E.G. What are the steps from your alarm to starting your devotions? If they are not clear, you will fail. Get really practical with dress,
- To form a habit you must work out triggers to get you to do the thing you want.
- Become aware of the things that distract you from getting to devotions, like emails, telephone, noise, etc...

### 5. The Bible

- It is very important that you have a Bible reading plan. Systematic reading results in specific leading
- A version you love reading.
- Use more than one version. Study plus say "The Message"
- Try different versions.
- Get it from the bible, to your heart, into your mouth, and out of your mouth.
- There's only one book inspired by the Holy Spirit
- Be careful of "other books" taking the place of the scriptures in devotional time. Let God speak directly.
- Learn the scriptures from teachers (Bible School) and then go and hear for yourself.

### 6. Tools:

- Journal – to write down. Some may use electronic...
- Pen – be ready and expectant to receive something from God worth writing down and remembering...
- Do do list – to dump "things to do" – "Kitchen thoughts" ...
- Notebook – It's going to happen. You are going to be in the middle of having a wonderful time with God. Journaling your heart out...and you are going to remember that you're out of milk. This is where your planner comes in handy. You can write down, "get milk" and go right back to your journaling. If you don't have a planner, just use a scratch piece of paper. I don't know how many times my God time was hijacked by random thoughts of things I need to do for the day.
- Declutter your space and mind – I don't read emails before my time with God. Sets my mind off. I have enough challenge staying focused!

## 7. Pattern

What do I do in my devotions? Do I just wait? Pray through a list? Read through the Bible?

We are all different. Maybe you have something that's really working for you now. If not, here's a suggestion to try out:

One approach is to use a combination of the word ACTS and SOAP as an acronym for my pattern for prayer and Bible reading.

Whatever you do needs to shape a holistic pattern for your devotions, so that you don't just pray without reading, or just read without praying. It's about God talking to you through His word, and you talking to God through prayer

### ACT SOAP:

- ❖ Acknowledge
- ❖ Confession
- ❖ Thanksgiving

- ❖ Scripture
- ❖ Observation
- ❖ Application
- ❖ Prayer

### Lets look at this in a bit more detail:

#### Acknowledge

- Acknowledge His Lordship; That you believe; That He is God. That His word is truth.
- Acknowledge His love and His presence
- This may include worship

#### Confession

- *Search my heart O God and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in your way everlasting Ps 139:23-24*
- Forgive me. I have sinned. I am sorry. Cleanse me.
- I forgive those who have sinned against me...
- If you confess your sins...

#### Thanksgiving

- This is recognizing Gods goodness.
- Answers to prayers.
- Builds faith when you realize that Jesus is working in your life, even in ways you didn't ask for or expect.

#### Scripture

- Have a progressive reading plan. Don't wait to decide when you sit down for your devotions
- Systematic reading results in specific leading
- Read and focus, then write down a verse which stands out. This will train you to listen...
- Write a scripture down – a promise from what you have read and feel God speaking to you

## Observation

- As you read, write down any observations that you have from the text.
  - What does this passage or verse teach?
  - What does it teach about God, about discipleship, about life?
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

## Application

- How do I need to apply this truth to my life personally
- Based on what you have read...what should you do? Try to make this practical and realistic. Try to set a goal for the day based on your reading. Write it down and hold yourself accountable to it.

## Prayer

- Pray the observation and application of the scripture for your own life and into your world.
- Then pray for things that matter to you
  - In the world
  - Personally

Tip: Keep it simple. The goal of your time with God is to try to grow closer to Him. It's not to check off your list. Don't add extra burdens to this focus. "I have to make at least 15 observations." "I have to write at least 5 pages in my journal." "I have to pray for at least 45 minutes." The goal is to spend time with God and to grow closer to Him. Do what it takes to do just that...the rest is just distractions, burdens, and religion.

## Psalm 1:1-3

*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.<sup>2</sup> But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.<sup>3</sup> He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.*

## A Plan for Developing Personal Deeper Dynamic Daily Devotions

Every Nation Church London – [www.everynation.co.uk](http://www.everynation.co.uk)

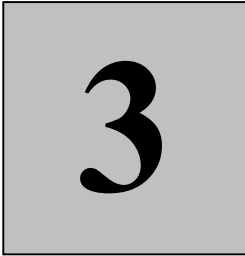
**A call to devotion: Psalm 27** <sup>7</sup>Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. <sup>8</sup>My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek... <sup>11</sup>Teach me your way, O LORD; ... <sup>13</sup>I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. <sup>14</sup>Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

### Preparation:

When	Length	Where
Passage/s to read this week:		
Bible		

### My Devotion Pattern: "A.C.T. S.O.A.P."

<b>A. C. T.</b>	<b>A</b> Acknowledge	• Lord You are...
	<b>C</b> Confession	• Lord, I'm sorry for... forgive me... cleanse me...
	<b>T</b> Thanks - giving	• Lord, I'm thankful for...
<b>S. O. A. P.</b>	<b>S</b> Scripture	• What I "heard"/ what "spoke to me":
	<b>O</b> Observation	• What I learnt / understood:
	<b>A</b> Application	• How I will apply this to my life:
	<b>P</b> Prayer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pray the Scripture application</li> <li>• Pray for what matters to you</li> <li>• Pray for needs</li> </ul>



## DEVELOPING THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF “FELLOWSHIP”

### WHAT IS “FELLOWSHIP”?

The Biblical call to the discipline of fellowship from Heb 10:24

*<sup>24</sup>And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good works. <sup>25</sup>Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Read this in The Message Translation:

*Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshipping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching.*

Fellowship is more than “just getting together.” It is a wholehearted commitment to living out the love and truth of Christ together as believers.

It is still “not good to be alone,” and authentic fellowship is an essential part of the disciple’s life and witness.

The word “fellowship” (Greek: koinonia) carries the basic idea of having something in common. Christian fellowship begins with our common salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (Jude 3). God calls us His children, and births us into His family, the Church.

### THE IMPERATIVE OF LOVE

Rooted in love, Christian fellowship is Christ-centred and Christ-revealing.

**John 13:34-35** *A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

Write down ten words which you think describe some essential ingredients of “authentic Christian fellowship”:

.....

.....

.....

The example of the early church in Acts 2:46-47 is especially challenging:

*So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

**CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING “FELLOWSHIP INSTRUCTIONS:”**

1. **Rom 12: 9** *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord.*
2. **Eph 4:32** *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*
3. **1 John 1:6-8** *If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. <sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*
4. **Eph 4:1-3** *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*
5. **1 John 3:11-12** *This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. <sup>12</sup> Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.*
6. **Heb 12:14-15** *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: <sup>15</sup> looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;*
7. **Matt 18:20** *For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.*
8. **Col 3:15-16** *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

Being “planted” is a metaphor for commitment. In Psalm 92:12-14 we see the blessing which comes from being planted/committed to fellowship in God’s House/His Church:

- <sup>12</sup>*The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*
- <sup>13</sup>*Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.*
- <sup>14</sup>*They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing,*

The call to fellowship is a call to be planted in relationship and in a common kingdom cause. Disciples are not drifters, they put down roots and do whatever it takes to “live the love”, demonstrating to the world the love of Christ.

**IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE, WHAT ARE YOUR “FELLOWSHIP HABITS?”**

- Sunday/weekend church service: (My average attendance out of 4 is .....)
- Connect Group/ Small Group: (My average attendance out of 4 is .....)
- For what reasons have you recently missed an agreed fellowship meeting? (What stopped you attending your church Sunday service, or your Connect Group meeting?)  
.....  
.....

# 4

## DEVELOPING THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF “COMMUNION”

### Jesus about communion:

1. **Matt 26:26-28** *While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."<sup>27</sup> Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.<sup>28</sup> This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."<sup>29</sup> I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."*
2. **Mark 14:22-24** *While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."<sup>23</sup> Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.<sup>24</sup> "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."*
3. **Luke 22:19-20** *And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."<sup>20</sup> In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."*
4. **John 6:53-54** *Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood; you have no life in you.<sup>54</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."*

### Paul's instruction concerning communion:

**1 Cor 10:16-17** *Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?<sup>17</sup> Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.*

**1 Cor 11:23-34** *For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,<sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."<sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."<sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

<sup>27</sup>Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.<sup>28</sup>A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.<sup>29</sup>For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

<sup>30</sup>That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.<sup>31</sup>But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.<sup>32</sup>When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

<sup>33</sup>So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other.<sup>34</sup>If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.

**Exercise:** Imagine that you had inherited no “communion “tradition”, and the scriptures on this page were the only instructions you had to guide you. Speak about how this may effect / change the way you approached communion, and then share communion in your group, making reference to the scripture for every action you take.

**Why do we observe Communion?**

- 1. Because the Lord told us to! We are to obey His commands:

*1 Cor 11:24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."*

- 2. In observing Communion we are remembering Christ and all that He has done for us in his life, death and resurrection:

*1 Cor 11:24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."*

- 3. In observing Communion we are proclaiming His death until He comes:

*1 Cor 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

- 4. When observing Communion we take time to examine ourselves:

*1 Cor 11:28-32 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. <sup>29</sup>For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. <sup>30</sup>That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. <sup>31</sup>But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. <sup>32</sup>When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.*

- 5. When we observe Communion we show our participation in the body of Christ:

*1 Cor 10:16-17 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup>Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf*

**Some practical communion questions:**

- 1. How often should we take communion?  
.....
- 2. What should be in the cup, and what kind of bread should we use?  
.....
- 3. Who can serve communion?  
.....
- 4. Who can partake/share in the communion meal?  
.....
- 5. Should I pass on communion under some circumstances?  
.....

# 5

## DEVELOPING THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF "FASTING"

### WHAT IS "FASTING"?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline clearly encouraged for New Testament believers. Jesus fasted, the Apostle Paul fasted, and the early church fasted. In Luke chapter 4:1 we read that Jesus went into the wilderness "filled with the Holy Spirit," and "in those days He ate nothing, afterwards ... He was hungry." Yes, even Jesus was hungry! But when you read verse 14 you see that after His fast "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit." This is the testimony of fasting!

**1 Cor 11:28** *A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.*

### A brief Biblical and practical guide to fasting:

1. Jesus said: "*When you fast*", not "*if*" you fast, (Matt 6:16). Jesus obviously expected that we would fast, and the early church definitely fasted - Acts 13:2; 14:23.

**Matt 6:16** *When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.*

**Acts 13:2** *While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

**Acts 14:23** *Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.*

2. Fast with the right motives: to give your spirit man opportunity to draw near to God. Do it out of DESIRE, not DUTY or DESPERATION.
3. The focus is on what you DO DO, (pray), and not what you DON'T DO, (eat). Fasting without prayer is starvation (Or at best dieting)!
4. Fasting is necessary preparation for certain spiritual battles. This needs spiritual discernment. Do this as you are led by the Spirit.
5. Make fasting a regular habit in your spiritual walk, rather than an emergency call in time of specific need or desperation. When Jesus' disciples could not cast out a deaf and dumb spirit, and they asked Him why He could when they could not, He replied: "*However, this kind does not go out but by prayer and fasting.*" (Matt 17:21). Jesus did not fast at that very moment before He prayed. He obviously was referring to a habit/discipline of fasting which releases spiritual power.
6. Make sure that you do not have a medical reason which may affect your health when fasting. Check with a doctor if you have any doubts about this. If you have a medical or other reason for not being able to fast from food completely, then fast in a different way (eg. Fast from all solid foods).

7. Food is not the only thing we can fast from. There are a variety of fasts mentioned in the Bible, the most regular seems to be fasting from all food, and drinking only water. We can also fast from activities, TV, leisure, sport, hobbies, (all "things of this world"). Note: These are not "bad" things, but by giving them up for a season, we give our spirit man the opportunity to feed and be strengthened.
8. Don't make impulsive and rash decisions about how long you are going to fast for (Like Saul did in 1 Samuel 14). Be wise. Start slowly. This is not a one-off-wonder formula, but a discipline to be cultivated. Do not attempt long fasts without building up to them with shorter fasts. Start with a regular one day fast, and then develop this discipline as you are led.
9. It is a good idea to decide how long you are going to fast for before you start, as that will help you to not make rash decisions to stop at the smell of the next meal! Sometimes you will need to stop earlier for various reasons, but don't just do this lightly.
10. Don't fast to impress anyone, including God. Fast before the Lord, not men, (Matt 6:18). This does not mean that you will lose your blessing if anyone finds out! It's a good idea to tell those closest to you about your plans, as they may not be happy if they cook you a meal and then find out!
11. Feed RICHLY on the Word during your fast. Job 23:12 - *I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.* Jesus had clear revelation of "what was written" during His fast recorded in Luke 4.
12. Be specific about what you are fasting for. Have a clear purpose. Without "vision" your fast will soon "perish". Be hungry for His presence, for His heart, not just the "thing" you are seeking.
13. Pray to commit your fast and your reasons for fasting to the Lord when you start. Believe God for strength and endurance. Trust the Holy Spirit to help you.
14. Don't go looking for people to minister to during your fast - rather minister to the Lord, and let Him minister to you. Make Him your focus. Then be prepared to minister to others in power when you end your fast.
15. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that needs to be cultivated before it will bear fruit. Initially the only thing you will feel it producing is hunger pains! It takes training for our flesh to yield to the spirit.
16. Keep yourself well groomed during your fast, drink plenty of water and brush your teeth often – breath fresheners are allowed!

### Some guidelines for an effective one day fast:

1. Fast from after the evening meal, throughout the next day, until breakfast. Don't overeat before you start!
2. If possible, drink only water. Drink lots of it.
3. Substitute your usual mealtimes with Bible reading, prayer and worship. Consider focussing on a specific chapter or book of the Bible for the day, and have a notebook on hand to record your impressions.
4. You may battle to focus on spiritual things during the day, especially if you are working in a demanding job. Try to have a specific verse to meditate on during work time, and use your breaks for specific prayer.
5. Persevere, go to bed earlier than usual at the end of the day, and rise earlier than normal to spend quality time with the Lord before you break your fast at breakfast.
6. If you make this a regular habit you will find it a source of great spiritual strength and growth to your spirit.
7. Fasting is a habit which must be learnt in order to gain the most benefit from it. It is not just something we should do out of desperation in specific situations. I encourage you to make it a spiritual discipline habit, and you too will experience more of "the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14)

### Consider what you think the application of "true fast" of Isaiah 58 is for us today:

*<sup>6</sup>Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?*

*<sup>7</sup>Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter; when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? <sup>8</sup>Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. <sup>9</sup>Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.*



## THE CALL TO WORSHIP

**Matthew 4:10** – *Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only*

**Psalm 95** *...let us sing for joy, come before Him with thanksgiving, extol Him with music and song, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker...*

**Psalm 96** *Sing to the Lord a new song, praise His Name, He is worthy of praise, worship the Lord in the splendour of His holiness...*

**Psalm 98** *Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music...*

**Psalm 150** *Praise the Lord, praise Him for His acts of power, praise Him for His surpassing greatness, praise Him with the sounding trumpet, harp, lyre, tambourine, dancing, strings, flute, clash of cymbals, resounding cymbals – let everything that hath breath praise the Lord*

**John 4:23** *But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*

**Bible Hebrew and Greek words for worship that give us a deeper revelation of what worship is:**

### PRAISE

- **Yadah** – (Hebrew) *To extend the hands (throw out in worship), to give thanks, to praise aloud, to confess (the Name of God) – 2 Chr 20:21; throughout the Psalms*
- **Halal** – (Hebrew) - (Hallelujah) *To shine; boast; rave; celebrate; be glamorously foolish, to praise – 2 Chr 20:19-21; Ps 150.*
- **Tehillah** – (Hebrew) *refers to specific acts of singing songs and hymns to God. Ps 34 “his praise will always be on my lips”. It is also the first sound of blowing the Shophar (ram horn trumpet) used by the Hebrews. The sound is one long continuous burst explained as a sound of triumph and joy.*
- **Shabach** – (Hebrew) *To address in a loud tone; to shout; to command glory – Ps 63:1-4; 117:1; 47:1; 35:27*
- **Guhl** – *To spin around under the influence of a violent / abundant emotion and joy; exceeding gladness - Ps 32:11; Zeph 3:17*

## WORSHIP

The word worship comes from the Old English word “WORTHSHIP” which means to “esteem worth of, and to make a suitable response to that worthiness.”

- **Hawah:** (Hebrew) *to bow down, conveys the idea of honouring God and expressing an attitude of submission to Him*
- **Proskuneo:** (Greek) *To kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand; to fawn or crouch; to prostrate oneself in homage, do reverence to, adore.*

Worship is an attitude of the heart, an overflow of thoughts and emotions. An outpouring of the soul in deep expression of reverence, awe, wonder and adoration

AW Tozier said that worship means “to feel the heart,” and “to express in some appropriate manner” what you feel.

**True worship is a response to God.** Worship is not something which is simply stirred up or forced. It is the natural, heartfelt response which comes from an understanding of who God is and what He has done.

Just as an indescribable sunset or a breathtaking mountaintop vista evokes a spontaneous response, so we cannot encounter the worthiness of God without the response of worship. The more you know Him the more you will respond to Him in worship.

## WHAT DOES A DISCIPLINED LIFE OF THE WORSHIP LOOK LIKE?

**John 4:23** – *“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth;*

To worship God in spirit is to worship Him from the inside out.

To worship God in truth is to worship according to the truth of Scripture. So we must worship in both spirit and truth, with both heart and head, with both emotions and thought.

Worship encompasses our spiritual lives, our physical lives, our social lives and the giving of our tithes and offerings. Worship is our life, not just a Sunday thing. Your thoughts, your actions and reactions are often a clear indication of a life of worship.

## A FEW THINGS THAT HAPPEN WHEN WE WORSHIP:

### 1. Celebration

**Psalm 16:9-11** *I'm happy from the inside out, and from the outside in, I'm firmly formed.  
<sup>10</sup>You cancelled my ticket to hell—that's not my destination! <sup>11</sup>Now you've got my feet on the life path, all radiant from the shining of your face. Ever since you took my hand, I'm on the right way.*

Sometimes when you are lost in worship you just want to raise your voice, lift your hands, throw your head back, dance and rejoice, purely because you are in God's presence. There's so much to celebrate!

### 2. Freedom - When Paul and Silas were in Jail, they worshipped God. What happened? Miraculously they were set free. The situation they were in was nothing to praise and worship about but they had faith in God and they worshipped Him.

**Psalm 22:3** – He dwells and manifests His power and presence where His people lift up praise to Him

3. **Evangelism** – When Paul and Silas worshipped in jail – the result was not only were they set free but the jailer and his family ended up giving their lives to Christ!
  - a. Many times when people see the presence of God in your life the end result will be their salvation. But when people see people singing and making noise for noise sake, people will be put off. 1 Corinthians 13:1 – *“If I do not have love, I am only a noisy bell or a clashing symbol”*.
  - b. Remember who you represent. When you worship in truth, people are drawn towards Christ.
4. **Healing** – One of the Greek words for worship is “therepeuo” which means *to cure and to heal*. Many times during worship someone will receive a prophetic song, words of life, comfort, and healing.
  - a. Words of life that are played, sung or spoken can minister healing. It is not the song, music, or words that ministers, **it is the anointing as worship happens that breathes life where maybe there was none.**
  - b. **Ex 5:2** – *He is my strength and my song* - There is such strength when you decide to worship God for who He is despite your circumstances.

**God shows up!** – Ps 22:3 – *He inhabits our praises!*

## **A DISCIPLINED LIFE OF WORSHIP COULD INCLUDE:**

### **1. Finding your Holy Place**

**Heb 10:25** *“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing.”*  
Christianity is not an isolationist religion.

But no matter how fulfilling or sufficient our regular public worship seems, there are experiences with God that He gives only in our private worship. Jesus participated faithfully in the public worship of God in the synagogue, however, He often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

How is it possible to worship God publicly one day a week when we do not worship Him privately throughout the week? Isn't it because we don't worship well in private that our corporate worship experience dissatisfies us?

Think of it: The Lord Jesus Christ is willing to meet with you privately for as long as you want, and He is willing – even eager – to meet with you every day!

### **2. Practice staying focused**

To worship God through our lifetime requires discipline. Without discipline our worship will be thin and inconsistent.

True worship can't be diagrammed or calculated because it is a response of a heart in love with God. And yet, it is a discipline that must be cultivated just as all relationships must be to remain healthy and grow.

### **3. Overcoming hindrances**

- **Guilt and condemnation** - God Convicts He does not condemn. Conviction leads to repentance, condemnation leads to despair. John 3:17 – *“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*
- We do not get purified in order to worship – we worship and are consequently purified.

- **Pride** – Worship is the humbling of self and the exalting of God.
- Peer pressure - we tend to be more concerned about the opinions of others that we are about the Lord's opinion.
- “Never **do** anything because others are looking at you and never **refrain** from anything because others are looking at you.”
- **Feelings** – The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. We must participate in worship, especially during the times we don't feel like it. If we allow our worship to be controlled by our feelings, we will never gain victory in our Christian walk. We do not worship because we feel like it – we worship because Christ is worthy!
- **Spectatorism** – How easy it is to get caught up in watching the proceedings of a worship service and afterwards find that we have done everything but worship! Paul made no mention of the gift of surveillance in his epistles.
- I've tried it and it doesn't work for me! I attend church, I read my Bible daily, I pray but it's not working! I don't seem to be growing in Godliness.
- Why continue if we are just worshipping in vain?
- Every believer will cross a few spiritual deserts. Some of those deserts will be crossed in an hour or a few days. Occasionally, however, you may be required to travel for weeks with an almost withered soul. Press on in worship. Cry out to God for a renewed awareness of the streams of living water that Jesus promised in John 7:38. Don't stop worshipping. Never give up in the desert. You don't know how wide it is and you may be almost across.
- Get counsel from those who are growing in Godliness through public and private worship. Talk to mature Christians and ask for help. Review all of the lessons on Spiritual Disciplines.

#### 4. Put your 'habit' on

The word 'habit' has its roots in Middle English, “*clothing*,” Old French, “*clothing, behaviour custom*,” and ultimately in the Latin word 'habitus,' which means “*condition, character*.” At one point in history 'habit' became particularly associated with distinctive dress or costume, especially of a religious order.

**Isaiah 61:3** “*And provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour.*”

#### **Books on Praise and Worship used for this teaching and also recommended for further study:**

In her book *The Habit: A history of the Clothing of Catholic Nuns*, Elizabeth Kuhns writes:

“For these nuns, the habit is a wearable sacramental with a supernatural character that cannot be replicated in secular clothing....It is important to remember that clothing is a uniquely human characteristic, a silent but powerful medium from which we can learn who we are and what we value. The sighting of a nun in habit remains for most of us a notable event, because what the habit proclaims is something so counterculture and so radical, we cannot help but to react with awe and reverence or with suspicion and disdain.”

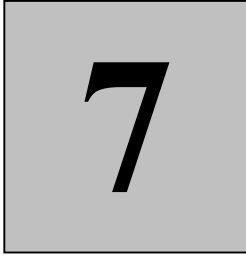
David Crowder writes in response to the above excerpt in his book *Praise Habit*:

“In our encounter with Christ, we too have been laid down, devastated by His grace. We have been covered by this same grace. Our Identity has changed. We have been given new clothes. We have put on Christ. We wear this very rescue into our relationships with friends and family, to work and to play. And this way of life should be so compelling and mysterious and other-than that people see us coming from a long way off and it stops them in their tracks and they wait and watch just to see our exchanges and wonder at this life that has been chosen and how to put it on and what is this deeper, truer way of living anyway?

A nun does not get up each morning and got to the closet and think to herself, Hmmm, I wonder what to wear today. The habit is what she wears. It is what covers her. It is what identifies her. Our condition is the same. Our habit is the Christ. He is what covers us. He is what identifies us. We wear Him into every moment, and when we live with this awareness,” we WORSHIP CHRIST.

#### **Further Worship Resources:**

- *Praise Habit, Finding God in Sunsets and Sushi* – David Crowder
- *Worship* – Darlene Zschech
- *The Practice of Praise* – C.H. Spurgeon
- *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* – Donald Whitney
- *Biblical Foundations* – Rice Brooks, Phil Bonasso, Steve Murrell
- *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World* – Joanna Weaver
- *The Heart of Worship Files* – Matt Redman
- *Exploring Worship* – Bob Sorge
- *A Heart Like His, Intimate Reflections on the life of David* – Beth Moore
- *To Live is Christ, Embracing the Passion of Paul* – Beth Moore



## DEVELOPING THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF “STEWARDSHIP” AND TITHING

### STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLES

**Stewardship is the personal responsibility for taking care of another person's property or financial affairs.**

Biblical stewardship covers all aspects of your life, it includes your time, talents, possessions and yes, money. Time prohibits a full discussion on biblical aspect of money and its use, but the Bible does contain some 2,350 verses on money and its use, including but not limited to: debt, investing, work, honesty, and giving. This teaching will cover stewardship in general and giving in specific.

- There are two economic kingdoms on the earth today: God's and man's, and there is a contradiction here between God's economy and man's: the simple fact is that God is the difference!

*Isaiah 55:8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways."*

- From man's perspective there is no sound logical reason to follow God, as God operates in the unseen spiritual world.

*1 Cor 2:14-15* <sup>14</sup>"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>15</sup>The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment"

### There are three reasons our Lord said what He said about money

1. How we handle money impacts our fellowship with the Lord.  
**Luke 16:11** *"If therefore you have not been faithful with the use of worldly wealth, who will entrust true riches to you."*
  - Jesus is equating how we handle money with our spiritual walk.
  - Intimacy - Matthew 25:21 - In the proper use of the talents they both enter into the "joy" of their master (same reward for both).
2. Possessions can compete for the mastery of our lives.  
**Matt 6:24** *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."*

During the crusades of the 12<sup>th</sup> century mercenaries were baptized but held their swords out the water to symbolize that fact that Jesus did not control them. Many Christians do the same thing with their wallets/money today.

3. Much of your life revolves around the use of money.  
Think of all the decisions in your life that will revolve around money.

## Our stewardship responsibility

### 1. FAITHFULNESS

**1 Cor 4:2** *More over it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful*

- A. Faithful with what we are given - parable of the talents (each received the same reward). The Lord rewards faithfulness no matter the amount of responsibility;
- B. Faithful in every area - we must take care of 100% of the money he has entrusted to us, not just 10%.

### 2. ACCOUNTABILITY

You are known, loved and held accountable

**Heb 4:13** *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

**Psalm 139:1-3** *O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. <sup>2</sup>You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. <sup>3</sup>You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.*

He knows everything. Judgment seat - 2 Cor 5:9-10. These perspectives should motivate us to handle money strictly according to the principles in Scripture. Remember, every spending decision is a spiritual one. Our life on earth is so brief when compared to eternity. 1 Corinthians 3v 12-14 (every spending decision is a spiritual decision).

### 3. CONTENTMENT

We can learn to be content. Contentment is mentioned 7 times in the bible and 6 times it has to do with money.

**Phil 4:11-12.** *I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup>I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*

## What are the benefits of good stewardship?

- A. More intimate relationship with Christ (Luke 16:10, Matt 25:21)
- B. The development of character - "you will either master the use of money or it will master you" David McConaugh. You can tell a lot about a person by looking at their bank statement and credit card statement.
- C. Having your financial house in order.

## Examples

- A. Zacchaeus (Luke 19) – Judged the reality of this man's salvation by his willingness (eager, cheerfulness) to give.
- B. The rich young ruler (Matt 19 v 16-30) opposite here....**But what about you and me?**

This Principle is timeless: ***There is a powerful relationship between our true spiritual condition and our attitude and actions concerning money and possessions.***

### **The Truth about the Tithe - What does the Bible teach on Giving and the “tithe”?**

#### **1. The practice of the tithe is mentioned before the Law of Moses**

**Gen 14:20** *And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand. Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything. So Abraham gave a tenth to the high priest Melchizedek.*

#### **2. Jacob covenanted to give a tithe to God at Bethel, which means “House of God”**

**Genesis 28:16-22** *When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." <sup>17</sup> He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." <sup>18</sup> Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. <sup>19</sup> He called that place Bethel, [a] though the city used to be called Luz.*

<sup>20</sup> *Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear <sup>21</sup> so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God <sup>22</sup> and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."*

So before the law we see the pattern of giving a tithe to God at His House

#### **3. Then the Law of Moses came and actually commanded 3 tithes**

- i. One for the priest and Levites (Numbers 18:21, 24)
- ii. One for the sacred festival (Deut 12:17-18; 14:23)
- iii. One for the orphans, widows, and the poor (Deut 14:28-29; 26:12-13)

The Levite and festival tithes were perpetual tithes (all the time) while the tithe for the poor was every third year. The total tithe came to 23%. As a note the average giving in the American Christians is close to 2.5% (10 times worse) It must be also said that the Jewish culture was not only spiritual but also governmental and some of this money would have fallen into the “tax” category. Estimates range on 7-13% of the 23%.

Remember that the law was given to “teach” us Galatians 3:19, 24. It was given to reveal truths to us that were established in the faith covenants of God with Adam & Eve, with Abraham, with Noah, etc. So the law does not introduce tithing, but it sheds light on the tithing practice of tithing already established through Abraham & Jacob’s relationship with God.

### **The Law teaches us that:**

- a. **The tithe is “holy” – it is His.** It is Gods money for Gods business. It is my responsibility to give it “upwards”.

**Leviticus 27:30** *'A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.*

- a. **The tithe is “whole” – it is never “divided up” by the giver.** Nowhere in the scripture is the tithe ever divided up by the giver. It is always given as a “whole.” You have to find out where and to whom to give your “whole tithe” to. Nowhere are you given liberty to decide to send portions of your tithe to different places and people, no matter how needy and good the causes may be. This therefore simultaneously calls us to a whole-hearted commitment to a church community.

**Malachi 3:10** *Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.*

- b. **The tithe was always only placed in Gods Priest or Gods House –** It belongs in your “storehouse” = the “house of God/local church” where you personally feed & serve in order to bless and feed the nations (ethnos) – the tithe identifies your agreement with the storehouse.

**Num 18:21** *I [God] give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting.*

**Deut 12:11** *Then to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name—there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the LORD.*

**Neh 10:37** *"Moreover, we will bring to the storerooms of the house of our God, to the priests, the first of our ground meal, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees and of our new wine and oil. And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all the towns where we work.*

Giving to the church and through the church in the New Testament

The practice of giving in the church is established as part of the local church lifestyle, where what they gave supplied the needs in the church family. Acts 2:44-47

The church was also the vehicle through which believers supported needs, missions, and church plants

Full time ministers and church workers are to be paid out of the tithes and offerings, and paid well.

**1 Tim 5:17-18** *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. <sup>18</sup> For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages."*

See also 1 Corinthians 9:7-12

- c. **The tithe was, and is –** the cross never changed the principle of the tithe. The New Testament adds a radical dimension of generosity to the aspect of a believer’s attitude to money and possessions. (see Acts 2)

Did Jesus do away with the discipline of tithing?

No, Jesus fulfilled the law, but tithing was not part of the law, but it came before the law through Abraham, just like faith did. The Law taught us about tithing, and Jesus never changed this, except that He established His church as the place where His people would meet

celebrating His sacrifice that set us free, instead of the Old Testament temple where people met in order to sacrifice.

#### Did Jesus uphold the practice of tithing?

Yes. In Matthew 23:23 Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for their heartless approach to the spiritual disciplines, but teaches that the answer is not to do away with these disciplines, including tithing as taught in the law, but to make sure that we embrace the heart of what living for God means. Jesus says: *“You should have practiced the latter (tithing), without neglecting the former.”* Matthew 23:23

The New Testament upholds the tithing practice of Abraham to Melchizedek, and reveals that Abraham was in fact tithing to God – see Hebrews 7:1-10. There is no annulment of the practice of tithing here, only revealing of the truth of it.

Since the New Testament reveals the “how much more” of the Father, as well as calling us to an “all” life for Jesus, we should not see a tithe as our financial giving goal, but rather as a basic spiritual discipline which is to be extended with generous living in every area of our lives, including additional financial offerings to the work of the church, or as led by the Holy Spirit.

In every instance that we can find of giving in the New Testament, it always exceeded the tithe.

#### Promises to the faithful tither and giver of offerings

- God would open up the floodgates of heavenly supply (Malachi 3:10)
- God would rebuke the devourer (Malachi 3:11)
- Your barns would be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow (Proverbs 3:9, 10)
- You will be a delightful land and the nations will call you blessed (Malachi 3:12)

#### Warnings about not giving tithes and offerings

- Called a thief (Malachi 3:8)
- Cursed (Malachi 3:9)

#### Advantages of Giving

- b. In God’s economy with the right attitude the giver receives the benefit not the receiver:  
**Acts 20:35** *Remember the words of our Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give rather than receive’.*
- c. Increased intimacy;  
**Matt 6:21** *“for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”*
- d. Increase in character: Christ is the unselfish giver. It has been said that “Giving is not God’s way of raising money; it is God’s way of raising people into the likeness of His Son”.
- e. Increase in heaven:  
**Matt 6:20** *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal.*
- f. Increase on earth:  
**Prov 11:24-25** *One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. <sup>25</sup>A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.*

## **Gods gives BREAD & SEED**

If you eat your seed instead of sowing it, you wont have a harvest.

**2 Cor 9:6-11** *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup>Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times; having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. <sup>9</sup>As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." <sup>10</sup>Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup>You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."*

### **Note:**

WHY the increase is happening, so that you have "all sufficiency in everything".

**Prov 3:9** *Honour the LORD with your possessions, And with the first-fruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.*

### **Summarising a disciplined approach to giving:**

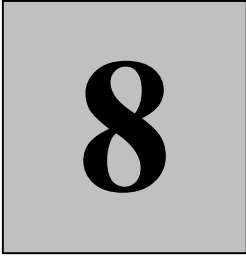
**1 Cor 16:2** *On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."*

- i. Giving should be periodic
- ii. Giving should be personel
- iii. Giving should be out of a private deposit (what I have)
- iv. Giving should be a priority
- v. Giving should be premeditated
- vi. Giving should be without pride

### **Conclusion**

When we acknowledge that *The earth is the Lords, and everything in it* (Psalm 24:1), and when we are faithful stewards of that which I entrusted to us by Him who owns everything, we will hear the Fathers voice saying:

***"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' – Mat 25:21***



## DEVELOPING THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF "THE SABBATH"

The term Sabbath derives from the Hebrew Shabbat, which means "to cease", and was first used in the Biblical account of the seventh day of Creation. The essence of Sabbath is "to cease from your own works, and to rest by faith in Gods work."

**Gen 2:3** *And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.*

The Sabbath is next mentioned as an instruction for wilderness survival during the exodus out of Egypt – this was before the Law was given:

**Ex 16:22-24** *On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much—two omers for each person; and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. <sup>23</sup>He said to them, "This is what the LORD commanded: 'Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.' " <sup>24</sup>So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it.*

The Sabbath is then enshrined in the Law as the 4th Commandment

**Ex 20:8-11** *Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days a week are set apart for your daily duties and regular work, <sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any kind of work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. <sup>11</sup>For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; then he rested on the seventh day. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.*

Under the Levitical Law, there were many strict guidelines with severe penalties associated with the Sabbath.

Christians generally refer to the Sabbath as "The Lords Day" – the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week, on which Christ was resurrected.

**Acts 13:44** *On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the Word of the Lord.*

Get away from arguments about the mechanics of the Sabbath, and enter the heart of it as revealed by Jesus:

**Col 2:16** *Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.*

### Jesus and the Sabbath:

**John 5:9-11** *At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, <sup>10</sup>and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat." <sup>11</sup>But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.' "*

**John 9:16** Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided.

### Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

**Mark 2: 23-28** One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. <sup>24</sup>The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" <sup>25</sup>He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? <sup>26</sup>In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." <sup>27</sup>Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." <sup>28</sup>So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

**Luke 14:1-6** One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. <sup>2</sup> There in front of him was a man suffering from dropsy. <sup>3</sup> Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" <sup>4</sup> But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him away. <sup>5</sup> Then he asked them, "If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?" <sup>6</sup> And they had nothing to say.

### The Sabbath is a call to rest from our own works, and to take rest in the completed work of Christ.

**Matt 11:28-30** "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Also see this in The Message Translation: *Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to Me. <sup>29</sup>Get away with Me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with Me and work with Me; watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. <sup>30</sup>I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with Me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.*

### Looking at Psalm 23:1-3, consider the practical application of the above specific aspects of the Sabbath in your life: The LORD is my shepherd,

- ✓ I shall not be in want – rest from my work
- ✓ He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters - rest for my body
- ✓ He restores my soul – restoring my soul
- ✓ He leads me in the paths of righteousness – reviving my spirit

**Heb 4: 9-11** There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; <sup>10</sup>for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. <sup>11</sup>Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest...