

The Joy of the Disciplines Part 4

Spiritual Practices Include Individual and Corporate Activities

Thesis: We are a people who are becoming aware of his presence, God with us. We need an intentional rhythm of spiritual practices to help us in this journey of joy.

Text: Matthew 1:22-23, 28:18-20; Genesis 28:16-17; Psalm 63:1-8

Let me remind you about our word for the year: **God with us—becoming a people aware of his presence.**

Presence-based living is about **connecting afresh with God.**

1. We want to become aware of the God who is here with us **individually.**
2. We want to become aware of the God who is here with us **corporately.**

How do we become aware of God's presence with us individually and corporately?

I believe it is through practicing the spiritual disciplines of Jesus relationally, intimately, and intently.

1. **Relationally:** engaging in a relationship with God, not just doing a ritual; to engage a person, not just doing an activity to mark off our checklist.
2. **Intimately:** pursuing intimacy with God.
3. **Intently:** with sufficient intensity and intentionality; effort; rhythm; practice.

God the Father is at work in our lives to shape our lives into the image of his Son, Jesus (Romans 8:28-29).

If God is going to shape our lives into the image of his Son, Jesus, then he intends for us to follow the same practices which Jesus did.

The early Christians were called followers of "the Way." The "Way" that they were talking about was "The Way of life," or the practices of life, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The early disciples looked like Jesus, talked like Jesus, and did the works of God just like Jesus did.

How was this possible? The disciples heard about and saw the spiritual practices of the Lord Jesus in his relationship with his Father. **The disciples were engaged in the same spiritual practices as Jesus, so that they could do what the Father was doing and could say what the Father was saying, just like Jesus modeled for them.**

Spiritual practices are not supposed to be drudgery, dry, or demoralizing. Rather, **God wants us to experience his joy, his life, his love as the outcome of our spiritual disciplines.** So, we are involved in a series of messages on **The Joy of the Disciplines.**

P1: Our first message in this series was Part 1, an introduction.

P2: On Jan. 22, we talked about the vision of joy for the spiritual practices.

P3: On Feb. 5, we considered that joy comes from connection to God and others. When you connect with God through Jesus Christ, you begin to experience joy (1) as a result of divine, mutual connection, (2) as a result of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life, and (3) as a result of connection with others.

P4: Today, we want to talk about spiritual practices we can use in our lives individually and corporately.

We need an **intentional rhythm of spiritual practices** to help us in this journey of joy.

1. Daily
2. Weekly
3. Occasional

Our spiritual practices include individual and corporate activities.

And, our spiritual activities need to work in the dailyness of life. It is not possible for some people to get up at 4:00 or 5:00am to do their spiritual practices. A mother of young children will find it difficult to find an hour for contemplation. Find ways to practice the disciplines during the course of your day and week.

Questions to ponder:

1. What are some spiritual practices that you can engage relationally, intimately, and intentionally in the course of your life? Remember to include individual and corporate practices.
2. What spiritual practice is life giving to you right now?
3. What spiritual practices that the Lord has asked you to do are challenging you?

An example of the joy of the disciplines from the life of David (Psalm 63:1-8)

O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. 2 I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. 3 Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. 4 I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. 5 My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. 6 On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. 7 Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. 8 My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me (Psalm 63:1-8).

1. **David engaged in spiritual practices relationally.**
 - a. Psalm 63:1a O God you are my God....
 - b. Personal: my God.
 - c. Relational: focusing on God, not just getting a spiritual practice finished.
2. **David engaged in spiritual practices intimately.**
 - a. Psalm 63:1b I seek you....
 - b. David sought intimate relationship with God, his God, the Living God.
3. **David engaged in spiritual practices intentionally.**
 - a. Psalm 63:1b earnestly I seek you....
 - b. David put in effort and intention to pursuing a relationship with his God.
 - c. There was sufficient intensity, intentionality, effort, rhythm, and practice in his life.

What are some spiritual practices we see in Psalm 63:1-8? (This list is not exhaustive of all the practices in which David engaged. But these are mentioned in this short passage.)

1. **Practicing the presence of God** (individual awareness).
 - a. Psalm 63:1c *my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*
 - b. David was aware of his desperate thirst for God in his inner man (thirst or desire).
 - c. David was aware of his body longing for God (longing; ache).
 - d. Take time throughout the day to be still and quiet for a minute or two to become aware of the God who is with you.
 - e. We have done a spiritual practice at Calvary called the **Sixtyfor60**. Get a timer or watch and set it to go off every hour. When the timer goes off, turn your heart, your affection, and your ear to God who is with you. Acknowledge the Lord's presence with you.
 - f. [The Sacrament of the Present Moment](#), Jean-Pierre de Caussade.
2. **Corporate worship** (corporate awareness).

- a. *Psalm 63:2 I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory.*
- b. **David was aware of God in the corporate gatherings** (*I have seen you in the sanctuary*).
- c. **David paid attention to the power of God in their midst** (*I have beheld your power*).
 - i. **What are some displays of God's power in our corporate worship services and gatherings?**
 1. Healing
 2. Conviction
 3. Communication from God or revelation from God
 4. Freedom
 5. Breakthrough
 6. New strength
 7. Fresh courage
 8. Energy
 9. Salvation
 10. Master Strategist: you can see his fingerprints in what God is doing or see him moving to make things clear to you over time.
 11. Hope
 12. Peace that passes understanding
 13. Encounters of love
 14. Deliverance
 15. Encouragement
 16. Etc.
 - ii. **Questions:**
 1. Are you **paying attention** to what God is saying and doing?
 2. Are you **blessing** what God is saying and doing in our midst?
- d. **David encountered the beauty of God in the corporate gathering** (*I have beheld your glory*).
 - i. God makes himself known in our midst.
 - ii. Are we paying attention?
 - iii. **Questions:**
 1. Can you see the beauty or glory of the Lord in our midst?
 2. Can you hear or perceive the encounters with the beauty of the Lord in the songs, music, testimonies, word, or ministry?
 - iv. **Moses** said he wanted to see the glory or beauty of the Lord.

1. *Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' 13 If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people." 14 The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." 15 Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. 16 How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" 17 And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." 18 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." 19 And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion... (Exodus 33:12-19).*
 2. *So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the LORD had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. 5 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. 6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 34:4-7).*
- v. **God caused his glory to manifest to Moses as:**
1. His goodness (Exodus 33:19). God is good.
 2. His name (character) (Exodus 33:19). God is whole and full of integrity in his nature.
 3. His mercy (Exodus 33:19).

4. The compassionate God (Exodus 34:6). Jesus was full of compassion; that is what moved him to heal and touch people.
5. The gracious God (Exodus 34:6). God is full of grace (John 1:14).
6. Slow to anger (Exodus 34:6). Praise God is patient and doesn't have a short fuse.
7. Abounding in love (Exodus 34:6). God is love and exudes love in everything he says and does.
8. Abounding in faithfulness (Exodus 34:6). God gives his word and keeps his word.
9. Maintaining love to a thousand generations (Exodus 34:7). God pours out his blessing of his loving presence to a thousand generations.
10. Forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin (Exodus 34:7). God chooses to cancel and forget the debt we owe because of our evil choices, willful disobedience, and places we fall short of his glory through the cross of Christ.
11. Fulfills justice. God is just and deals with evil, and yet puts limits on that punishment.
 - a. *Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 34:7).*
 - b. Compare that to blessing a thousand generations of those who love him.

vi. **Questions:**

1. **What have you seen of the manifest beauty or glory of the Lord in our corporate gatherings?**
 2. **Are you aware of God's presence among us corporately?**
3. **Personal worship.**
- a. *Psalm 63:4a I will praise you as long as I live....*
 - b. *Psalm 63:4b and in your name I will lift up my hands.*
 - c. *Psalm 63:5b with singing lips my mouth will praise you.*
 - d. May our lives burn with affection, adoration, and worship for God. And may our lips declare it with word and song.
4. **Reflection.**
- a. *Psalm 63:6a On my bed I **remember** you....*
 - b. It is good to take time through the day to reflect on what the Lord is saying and doing in you, through you, and around you.
 - c. It is also good to engage in the practice of [Examen](#).
5. **Meditation.**
- a. *Psalm 63:6b I think of you through the watches of the night.*

- b. We know that David read and meditated on God and the Word of God.
 - c. Take time to meditate on God's word and to think about what the Lord is saying to you. Take time to think about God.
6. **Intercession.**
- a. *Psalm 63:6b through the watches of the night.*
 - b. David was a watchman or intercessor; he was at his post blessing what the Lord was doing and saying "no" to the plans of the enemy. That is his testimony through the Scriptures.
 - c. Intercession is practiced both individually and corporately.
 - d. Intercession is about reminding God of what he has said (Isaiah 62:6-7 NASB).
 - e. Intercession involves standing in the gap and building up the wall (Ezekiel 22:30).
 - f. Intercession is about getting in the gap between the way things are and the way God wants them to be (Matthew 6:10).
7. **And, we know that through is life David engaged in other spiritual practices like:**
- a. Giving: generosity.
 - b. Obedience: which is an act of worship.
 - c. Spiritual warfare: like when he played his harp for King Saul and it brought peace to his tormented life.
 - d. Petition: the Psalms are full of the cries and petitions of David.
 - e. Walking in the light: David was a man who sought to repent of his sins and to walk authentically with God and others. (See Psalm 51 for example.)
8. **Here is a list of some other spiritual disciplines in which you can engage on a daily, weekly, or occasional basis.** (Note: This list is a sampling and is not exhaustive.)
- a. **Individual:**
 - i. Prayer: listening to and talking with God.
 - ii. Sabbath: rest, recreation, refreshing, reflection; feeding your soul.
 - iii. Fasting.
 - iv. Tithing.
 - v. Giving.
 - vi. Contemplation or passive prayer.
 - vii. Prayerwalking.
 - viii. Journaling.
 - ix. Spending time in God's word through reading Scripture devotionally or listening to Scripture if you are an auditory learner.
 - b. **Corporate:**
 - i. Engaging in authentic community (small groups); walking in the light with others, getting prayer, and praying for others.
 - ii. Serving others and meeting needs.
 - iii. Partnering with Jesus on his mission together with others through Missional Communities.
 - iv. Discerning the voice of the Spirit through dialogue with others.
 - v. Praying for others on Ministry Teams.

- vi. Corporate intercession: *my house shall be a house of prayer for all nations (Mark 11:17).*
- vii. Reading Scripture publicly.
- c. **Resources regarding the spiritual disciplines:**
 - i. [*The Making of an Ordinary Saint: My Journey from Frustration to Joy with the Spiritual Disciplines*](#), Nathan Foster.
 - ii. [*The Celebration of Discipline*](#), Richard Foster.
 - iii. [*The Spirit of the Disciplines*](#), Dallas Willard.
 - iv. [*The Sacrament of the Present Moment*](#), Jean-Pierre de Caussade with an intro by Richard Foster.
 - v. [*The Other Half of Church: Christian Community, Brain Science, and Overcoming Spiritual Stagnation*](#), Jim Wilder, Michel Hendricks
 - vi. [*Thinking with God: Weaving God's Thoughts into Human Identities and Relationships*](#), Jim Wilder, paper from June 2020.
 - vii. [*Thinking Biblically About The Life Model*](#), Michael Sullivant.

Summary:

We need an **intentional rhythm of spiritual practices** to help us in **this journey of joy**.

1. Daily
2. Weekly
3. Occasional

Our spiritual practices include individual and corporate activities.

Spiritual disciplines are a way to work out what God is working in us (Philippians 2:12-13).

We become aware of God's presence with us individually and corporately as we engage the **spiritual disciplines of Jesus relationally, intimately, and intently**.

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2. **Intimately**: pursuing intimacy with God.
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C'mon Calvary. Let's do this!

Ministry Time: