

# ▲ Relationship with God - Part 2 ▲

## Interacting with God = Spiritual Disciplines

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**Objectives:** LEAD participants will be able to put at least the basic spiritual disciplines into practice at home.

**Plan ahead:**

- Time required: 55 min
- You'll want to post your boards / newsprint around the room, so plan for that

**Before this lesson, LEADers must:**

- Read the excerpts from Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life

**Supplies:**

- White board or newsprint and pens (bring newsprint, too)
- Regular paper and Newsprint or large paper for Learning Tasks (one of each per group)

**Accompanying documents:**

- Excerpts from Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life (pre-reading)
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Instructor Notes: This lesson is based largely on the book Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, by Donald Whitney. It is an excellent, if slightly dated, read and I would strongly recommend it to the LEADers.

❖ **Get Started (hook, 10 min )**

Split into groups of 2 or 3. In the groups, talk about your favorite way to spend time with a friend. Find out what each person in your group's way is. Come up with a 2 minute skit to present these ways of spending time together to the group. Can be funny or serious. Do the skits.

As each group does their skit, have the rest of the LEADers shout out ways of spending time together that are being acted out. Write these on the board. Summarize at the end.

❖ **Learn / observe (book / look, 10 min)**

We'll use this list to figure out ways we relate to God, who is also a person. But before we dive it, there are some things we need to consider: how is our relationship with God DIFFERENT from our relationship with our friends?

- He's not physically present in the same way as a person is
  - Therefore, His words come to us differently
  - And our communication to Him is also a little different
- He's not really on the same level as us (!)

So the ways we interact with God are in some ways similar to the way we relate to other people, and in some ways different. One of the biggest differences is that we may become like our friends. This is just a fact of life: we become more like those we spend time with. But in our relationship with God, it is our GOAL to become like Jesus.

**Romans 8:29** *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son... 1John 3:2* ...we know that when he appears we shall be like him... As Christians, we are supposed to become like Jesus.

HOW does that happen? How do we become like Jesus? As you read in the article before class, " the only road to Christian maturity and godliness, a biblical term synonymous with Christ-like-ness and holiness, passes through the

practice of the spiritual disciplines." Just like the example of Kevin, the guitar player, or the example of professional football players who do lots of things that don't come naturally so that they can become what they've always wanted to be, so we can choose to practice the spiritual disciplines in order to become the person God made us to be.

Considering the disciplines outside of this context, they may look like drudgery. No doubt that's what a professional musician or athlete think about all their practices sometimes as well. But now they are free to express themselves fully because they've put in the time and effort to become all they could be. It is the same with spiritual disciplines. Only by consistently practicing them will we become free to be everything God made us to be, not bound by the pressures of peers or culture or family or expectations. But it takes as much dedication and perseverance as it does to become a pro athlete or musician. And it helps to pause to look at the end goal every once in a while. Are you up for the challenge?

Before we go there, let's look at the spiritual disciplines a little more.

We'll start with the list of ways we interact with friends and use that to consider our relationship with God. He, too, is a person. In many ways, we interact with him - that is, we have a relationship with him - in similar ways to how we interact with other people. For the purpose of this discussion, imagine a world without smart phones and such technology!

Brainstorm ways we interact with God.

(Use the list the group generated to develop a list of ways we can interact w/God. The order you put on your board is not important, but the \*asterisked four are considered the "basic" four.)

*Bible "intake"	Fasting
*Prayer	Silence and Solitude
*Fellowship	Journaling
*Worship	Witnessing / Evangelism
Serving	Perseverance
Stewardship	Learning

(Note: they may say, Bible reading. Write "intake" because reading is only one way to "get" the Bible - there is also listening to it in a variety of forms, and ways that we interact with the Bible after the initial hearing or reading.)

LEARNING TASK (15 min): Break into groups of 3 (2-4 if you can't do 3). Give each group a paper. Assign each group one of the following disciplines: **Prayer**                      **Worship**                      **Serving**                      **Stewardship**  
**Fasting**                      **Silence & solitude**                      **Journaling**                      **Evangelism**                      **Learning**  
(If you have too few groups and a group "finishes", give them another discipline.)

Do an example together: Bible "intake." Let's brainstorm as many different ways as we can think of that we can "get" Bible into our heads and how we can do those things regularly. (Write them on the board. A few ideas are below:)

- Read it each morning (and/or evening)
- Hear it preached in church - commit to going to church every week
- Listen to a recorded reading of the Bible during a recurring event each day or week
- Listen to an online sermon at a certain recurring time each week
- Go to a small group where you study it - commit to going each week
- Take a class where you learn about it for a semester, etc

In your group, come up with as many different way to practice "your" discipline as you can and how you can do that regularly such that it becomes a habit. (5 min)

(Regroup.) Before we share our ideas, open your notebooks to the chart, "Relationship with God, Part 2 - Disciplines". As we share our ideas, I'll write them on the board. You take notes in the "details / methods" column. These notes are only for you - ideas for you to think about later. So be as detailed or as general as you want. If other ideas come to mind, write them down - and share them if you want.

(Share / write on the boards / newsprint. Have the LEADers take notes in the "details" column. You'll want to

keep these on display until the end of the lesson.)

Review / summary: (The main point is that there are a variety of ways to practice the disciplines. See "Ideas Chart" on page 2 of the Disciplines Chart for ideas. Just as each LEADER interacts differently with their friends and with God, based on who God made HER to be, so the disciplines will likely look different in each of our lives - and that is FINE! The important thing is that we DO them.)

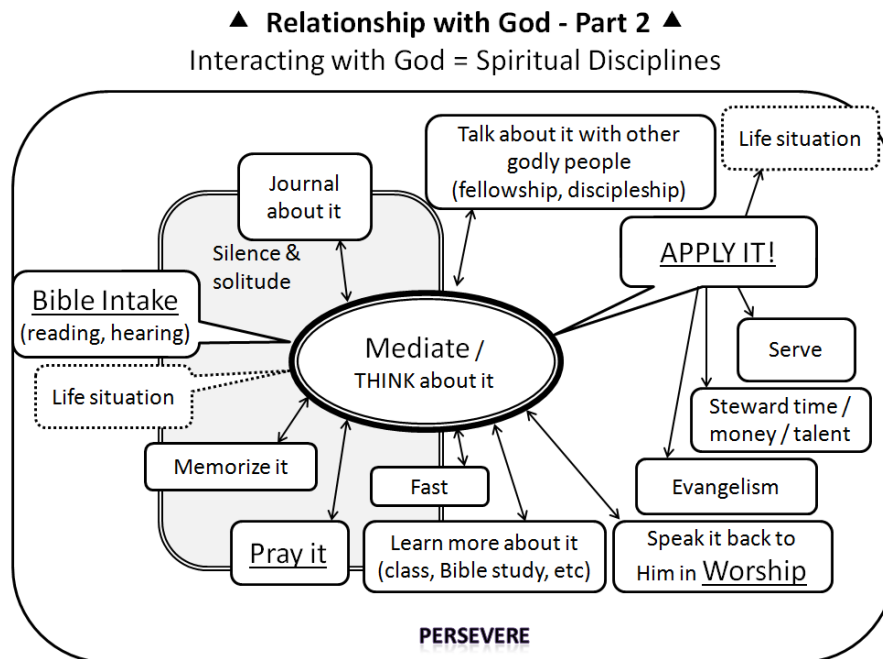
Let's go back to **Bible Intake**. On your chart, you see some other "details" listed beside it. Since the Bible is God's perfect, complete Word to us, it is the single unchanging foundation of all of these other disciplines. And there is more to it than just hearing or reading it. **James 1:23-24** says *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.* We can't just read it and walk away. There's more to it than that. We need to end up with a practical application that we can go and DO or CHANGE. The more we APPLY the Word, the more we get to know Jesus and become like Jesus, which is, in the end, our goal.

Since the starting point and the end goal of all the disciplines are the same, they are related to each other. Let's draw out how they are all related.

LEARNING TASK (15 min): In your group, write "Bible intake" on the left third. Write your discipline on the right third. Talk about what steps there are in between. Assuming we got up in the morning, like we do here at camp, and read the Bible, what step or steps would ideally happen between then and when you accomplished your discipline?

(You are not looking for huge and cosmic answers. In fact, the only thing that really needs to happen is "meditation" or thinking about what you read, and applying your life situation(s) to it.)

Regroup and summarize in a drawing that looks something like this (there is a copy of this in their notebooks):



How each discipline is related to Bible intake (talk through some of these ideas as you build the chart on the board):

- **Memorize it** - Allows us to think about it anywhere. Allows the Holy Spirit to bring it to mind when we need it most. Allows Bible intake to happen anywhere at any time. Allows us also to speak it (fellowship, evangelism, etc).
- **Journal about it** - Helps us think about it more carefully, and review or reflect on it again later. Allows us to review later and be able to see how God has been changing us and working around us.

- **Talk about it (fellowship / discipleship)** - Allows other people to speak into the situations we face, to answer questions we have, to model disciplines we could grow in. Allows us to do the same for others. Develops deeper understanding of the Bible through the broader ideas and thoughts of other people.
- **Learn more about it** - Similar to Fellowship, but not as personal. May go even deeper in understanding of the Bible. Also helps us see different perspectives.
- **Fast** - Reminds us to think about the Bible and to look for what God is doing, depending on why you are fasting.
- **Silence and solitude** - Plays a part in many of the disciplines. Give us space and time to reflect, to meditate, to think more deeply, to memorize, to pray, to fast, to journal, to worship privately, etc. May give more ideas for Application...
- **Pray it** - Allows us to speak God's word and desires back to Him (and His word does not come back to Him empty, Isaiah 55). As we speak to Him, sometimes He replies in that still small voice and directs us, or gives us a strong impression or intuition.
- **Worship** - Allows us to praise Him for what we've been learning and for what He's been doing. In private often, in public regularly like weekly. Reinforces what we are reading as we repeat it back to Him and recount His immense value and worth back to Him.
- **APPLY it** - If we don't apply what we've read / heard, we may as well have not read / heard.
- **Serve** - The Bible will guide us as we seek to serve and strengthen us to serve, to serve regularly and keep serving. As we serve, we'll learn more about ourselves and see opportunities for more application of what we read.
- **Give time / money** - The Bible will help us keep our priorities straight and rest assured that God will provide all our needs for both TIME and money, so we are free to give back to Him.
- **Evangelism** - If we know the Bible, we are more confident to talk about it and about Jesus. The Bible will guide us and to when and how to share. It will strengthen and encourage us to continue to share when we have the chance. And as we become more open about our relationship with Jesus, we will be more challenged to change and grow.
- **Persevere** - If we slack off in Bible intake, we weaken every other area of our relationship with Jesus as well. And most often, the first thing to slack off is application.

Summary: The "inputs" to our lives are essentially our "life situation" - just what is going on at the time - and the Bible. We interact with these two things primarily in our mind. We can do this through journaling, fasting, studying, talking about it, spending time alone in reflection, in prayer and in worship. But the most important thing is that we come away with a decision, a choice, a commitment to DO something - that we make a choice with our WILL. All the thinking in the world is useless without action. We consider, we think about our life in light of the Bible, and we make a change or a choice with our WILL. **Hebrews 5:14** says *solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil*. Years down the line, after doing this thousands of time, we will have slowly become a little more of the people God made us to be - the people our hearts really WANT to be.

### ❖ **Get Practical (took)**

Look at your note page. The third column is "I will..." In light of what we've just LEARNED (one of the disciplines), what will you DO?

Don't rush through this. When I say to, spread out in this room, and spend a moment in SILENCE AND SOLITUDE, and in PRAYER. Consider life back home. How can you incorporate each of these disciplines into your life? What changes do you need to make - both in scheduling and in ATTITUDE?

For example, you may not like church or you may be hesitant to serve in church in some way. Bring that before God in prayer and ask His help in changing those attitudes as you focus on the purpose behind what you are doing: to become who God made you to be, to draw near to Him and to become like Jesus. Ultimately, to prepare for eternity.

What questions do you have on what you are supposed to be doing?

Spread out in the room. I'll say when to come back together. If you don't finish all of these now, continue to work on them today and tomorrow, until they are complete.

❖ **Homework (follow up assignment):** finish the Note Page Chart.