

# Keeping in Step with the Spirit: Spiritual Disciplines as Kingdom Living

Beverly Heights Presbyterian Church | Kyle David Bennett, Ph.D.

Fall 2022

## WEEK THREE

Sin has become so natural to us, or sin has become so much our second nature, that we find the daily everyday to be entirely in order.

~ Søren Kierkegaard

Some believe it is only great power that can hold evil in check, but that is not what I have found. It is the small everyday deeds of ordinary folk that keep the darkness at bay. Small acts of kindness and love.

~ Gandalf the Grey

**Summary of Last Week:** We explored the nature and purpose of spiritual disciplines. What are they for? What is their endgame? We heard how John Cassian understood and recorded the practice of spiritual disciplines in the past. We learned that there is a “horizontal” aspect to them that has been forgotten or devalued. We discussed how these practices were meant to remedy selfish behavior and renew communities.

*Total vs. complete depravity: every thing is affected, including our spiritual and religious lives; yet we are not the worst we can be.*

SELF-CENTERED VIEW	SACRIFICIAL VIEW
Spiritual disciplines are for one’s own benefit	Spiritual disciplines benefit the community
Spiritual disciplines are meant to fix our spiritual problems (e.g., doubt, despair, etc.)	Spiritual disciplines are meant to correct bad behavior (eating, resting, working, etc.)
Spiritual disciplines are meant to inspire or edify the believer in his or her faith	Spiritual disciplines are meant to remedy the believer’s mental and bodily habits
Spiritual disciplines are a collection of individual practices from which one can choose	Spiritual disciplines are a way of life that one must discern and determine as a whole
Spiritual disciplines are practices that must be integrated into one’s already existing schedule and lifestyle	Spiritual disciplines are corrections to one’s already existing practices, schedule, and lifestyle
Spiritual disciplines need to be practiced only temporarily or seasonally	Spiritual disciplines need to be practiced regularly, and for the rest of one’s life
Spiritual disciplines are “special” practices that are distinct and separable from mundane activities	Spiritual disciplines are alternative ways of doing mundane activities in which we honor the Father, learn from the Son, and follow the Spirit in our execution of these mundane activities.
Spiritual disciplines are meant to be done by individual believers for their own “spiritual growth”	Spiritual disciplines are meant to be done by a community of individuals for the renewal of culture and society

*Country Club mindset vs. kingdom mindset. I’m a member and I get to use this service; I’m offering my life back to you.*

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The triune God's call, the Father's commandments, the Son's commission, and the Spirit's creation are all tied.

## •The Logic of Their Practice:

Not primarily for the individual but the community; not primarily about insight or knowledge but right living.

- *For Communal, Eschatological Living:* These are practices for a community (i.e. citizens of the kingdom, local church in neighborhood, individual family, etc.) to metamorphosize [μεταμορφούμεθα] its way of life together: thoughts, desires, habits, practices, interactions, and behavior (2 Cor. 3:18). That way of life is Life in the Spirit and Kingdom Living.
- *By Reforming and Renewing Whole Persons:* They “discipline our daily deeds” so that our lifestyle inhabits life together in the Spirit embodying the rules, regulations, rhythms, and rituals of God’s kingdom. They instruct (*disciplina* → disciple) us in that lifestyle and correct the things that prevent us from doing so.
  - “There can be no disciples without discipline. There can be no true image bearers without instruction. The endgame of following Jesus is not converts and confessors but citizens and custodians of his kingdom” (*Practices of Love*, 23).
- *Through Remediating Itty-Bitty, Nitty-Gritty Habits:* Take a worm’s eye view of how we think, eat, talk, socialize, own, work, and rest. Take a bird’s eye view of simplicity, meditation, fasting and feasting, solitude, silence, service, and keeping Sabbath. They remedy and renew the “malformed movements of the mundane:” how we think, eat, talk, socialize, own, work, and rest.

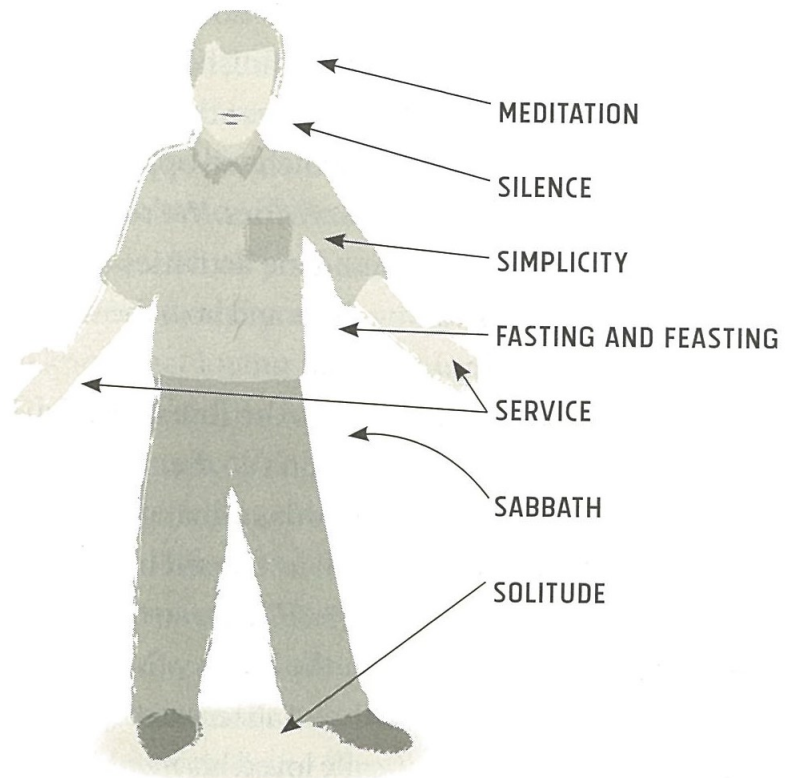
I don't think we realize how subtly self-centered our everyday norms and rituals have become.

Louise's question:

Habit (*habeo*) Practice Discipline

Believe in habit because it believes in you!

FIGURE 1.1



### Epigraphs

Luther: Don't you ever worry you're on the devil's side without even knowing it?

- “It’s actually in the crevices and corners of basic activities like eating, thinking, sharing, giving, socializing, owning, resting, and working where sin seeps in, sets up shop, and festers for years” (*Practices of Love*, 29)