

# How to Use Spiritual Disciplines to Grow Your Faith

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES KATHRYN SHIREY



My daughter's middle school musical was set in England, so the actors needed to learn British accents. To encourage the students to adopt an accent and get more comfortable using it, the teacher established days the actors had to speak only in British accents at school. On those days, they wore a button indicating they were practicing for the play and had to use their new accent in math class, language arts, and even lunchtime with their friends.

This discipline of putting their new skill into practice all through the day, even though it may have been difficult, embarrassing, and inconvenient, helped solidify the accent and gave the kids more confidence to use it in the musical. More than a mere homework assignment, this was an immersive discipline of becoming their character and living out the part.

We're not all actors in musicals, practicing our parts, but we do have roles to play in our life.

Which roles are you giving the priority?

**How are you preparing and ensuring you are fully living out your most important role as a child of God, a believer in Christ?**

## How are you practicing your faith and putting it into action?

### Faith is More than Belief

Faith in Christ begins with belief, that moment when he cracks the door open to your heart and you know he's who he says he is. In your head, you begin to believe the words of the Bible. Your heart begins to soften and your soul yearns for something more in Christ.

### Faith is more than belief, it's a journey of transformation.

Believing in God is not only an academic exercise of reading and knowing the Bible. Following Christ is more than merely accepting Jesus into your heart. **Faith is the daily yielding of your heart to God.** It's a life-long journey of transformation, step after step of letting go of your past to be made new in Christ.

### Spiritual Disciplines Grow Your Faith

Making a behavior change, such as starting a new habit or changing an old one, isn't easy. It takes dedication and discipline, daily practice of intentionally adding or removing something from your routine.

### Disciplines are how we develop good habits and practices in our lives.

As children, we learned the discipline of bedtime. While we may not have understood or liked it, adhering to bedtime routines and schedules helped us develop good sleep habits and ensured a good night's sleep. In school, we learned the discipline of studying. In sports, we learn the discipline of conditioning and skills drills.

### Developing your spiritual life also requires discipline and practice.

Living a vibrant faith, a life fully surrendered to God, a faith that truly makes a difference doesn't just happen by being saved and going to church on Sundays. You have to practice our faith and continue to grow deeper, learning the rhythms of inhaling and exhaling your faith until it permeates every fiber of your being.

Throughout Christianity, believers have leaned into spiritual disciplines to practice and grow their faith. While the Bible doesn't provide a definitive list of spiritual disciplines, it does show examples of Jesus and the early church creating spiritual habits in order to fully inhale and exhale their faith.

## What are the Spiritual Disciplines?

Richard Foster, in his book *Celebration of Discipline*, divides spiritual disciplines into three categories: inward disciplines, outward disciplines, and corporate disciplines.

The inward disciplines are ways to inhale your faith more deeply, studying, listening, reflecting, and allowing God to mold your heart.

The outward disciplines are ways to exhale your faith, serving others and living a life transformed.

The corporate disciplines are how to breathe faith together, worshiping God and seeking God's guidance through others.

## How Can You Use Spiritual Disciplines?

**Some spiritual disciplines are about giving up something in order to open yourself up to Christ.**

Do you need to cast off a burden or bad habit? Is something in your life holding you back from giving your best to God? Maybe you need to put some focus on giving that up, at least for a period of time.

You might try [silence](#), [fasting](#), rest, [unplugging](#), [observing Sabbath](#), or [simplifying](#) something in your life.

**Other spiritual disciplines are about taking something up so that you can build a new spiritual habit.**

Do you desire to spend more time with God, hear his voice more clearly in your life, listen for God's direction and guidance and learn to follow where he leads?

You might try taking up [Bible study](#), [prayer](#), or spiritual direction.

**Still others are about sharing your faith with others more openly.**

Do you desire to help others discover what you've found in Jesus? Do you want to learn how to incorporate your faith into every aspect of your life – at home, at school, at work, in your free time?

You may want to try the disciplines of [service](#), [fellowship](#), [hospitality](#), or [community](#).

### Why Use Spiritual Disciplines?

While we often associate the word 'discipline' with punishment, it really means a training exercise with the intent to develop skills or learn rules.

**The spiritual disciplines train us to develop our faith and learn to live under God's rule.**

The spiritual disciplines aren't just for the 'advanced' Christian or the clergy. They are meant for you and me, the ordinary Christian seeking to take a next step in their faith. Whether you're at step one, step 100, or step 100,000 in your walk with Christ, the spiritual disciplines are for you.

We all have room to grow and develop in our faith. You'll find different disciplines to be meaningful in different seasons of your life. Choose one that's appropriate for where you want and need to grow. Use it until God can do his work in that area of your life. You may just form a new habit!

### How Will You Take the Next Step in Your Faith?

Will you take the next step in your faith? Try taking on one a spiritual discipline and see how God can deepen his transforming work in your heart.

- Need to let go of something weighing heavy on your heart or something coming between you and God?
- Want to grow closer to God and hear his direction more clearly in your life?
- Feel ready to step out and spread God's love in the world, sharing your faith with others?

Below are just some of the spiritual disciplines you may want to try. Remember, you don't need to try them all (especially not all at once).

Choose one that fits your needs now, in this season of your life, in this stage of your spiritual journey.

- [Prayer](#)
- [Fasting](#)
- [Stillness](#)
- [Confession](#)

- [Forgiveness](#)
- [Bible Study](#)
- [Sharing Faith](#)
- [Community](#)
- [Examen](#)
- [Journaling](#)
- [Labyrinth Prayer](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer Partners](#)
- [Praying Scripture](#)
- [Prayer Walking](#)
- [Sabbath](#)
- [Silence](#)
- [Solitude](#)
- [Celebration](#)
- [Gratitude](#)
- [Presence](#)
- [Rest](#)
- [Simplicity](#)
- [Slowing](#)
- [Unplugging](#)
- [Hospitality](#)
- [Service](#)
- [Fellowship](#)

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