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The Way of Life

Vital Practices for Your Spiritual Journey

Psalm 62:1-2, 5-8

¹ Truly my soul finds rest in God;
my salvation comes from him.

² Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken...

⁵ Yes, my soul, find rest in God;
my hope comes from him.

⁶ Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

Psalm 62:1-2, 5-8

**⁷ My salvation and my honor depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.**

**⁸ Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge.**

Outline

- 1. The disciplines of retreat**
- 2. The reasons we need them**
- 3. How to put them in practice**

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1. The disciplines of retreat

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- **Solitude** – “to leave people behind and enter into time alone with God”
- **Silence** – “to free myself from the addiction to and distraction of noise so I can be totally present to the Lord”
- **Sabbath** – “to set apart one day a week for rest and worship of God”

—All definitions from Adele Calhoun’s *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*

1. The disciplines of retreat

Solitude and silence in the Psalms

- **Psalm 62:1-2: For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. ² He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.**

1. The disciplines of retreat

Solitude and silence in the Psalms

- **Psalm 4:3-4: Know that the Lord has set apart his faithful servant for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him. ⁴ Tremble and do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.**

1. The disciplines of retreat

Solitude and silence in the Psalms

- **Psalm 131:1-2: My heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. ² But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.**

1. The disciplines of retreat

Solitude and silence in the Psalms

- Psalm 46:10: “Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”

1. The disciplines of retreat

The practice of retreat in the life of Jesus

- **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.**

1. The disciplines of retreat

The practice of retreat in the life of Jesus

- **Mark 6:31-32:** Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”³² So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

1. The disciplines of retreat

The practice of retreat in the life of Jesus

- **Luke 5:15-16:** Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. ¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

1. The disciplines of retreat

The practice of retreat in the life of Jesus

- **Luke 22:39-40: Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.”**

Practicing the Way

Be with Jesus
Become like him
Do as he did

**John Mark
Comer**

New York Times bestselling author of
The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

For Jesus, the secret place wasn't just a place; it was a *practice*, a habit, a part of his life rhythm. He seemed to have little hiding places all over Israel where he would slip away to pray.

—John Mark Comer

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2. The reasons we these disciplines

2. The reasons we need them

Why do we need these practices?

- To better know our selves



I commend solitude to any of you who are seeking salvation, first, that you may study well your case as in the sight of God. Few men truly know themselves as they really are. Most people have seen themselves in a looking-glass, but there is another looking-glass, which gives true reflections, into which few men look.



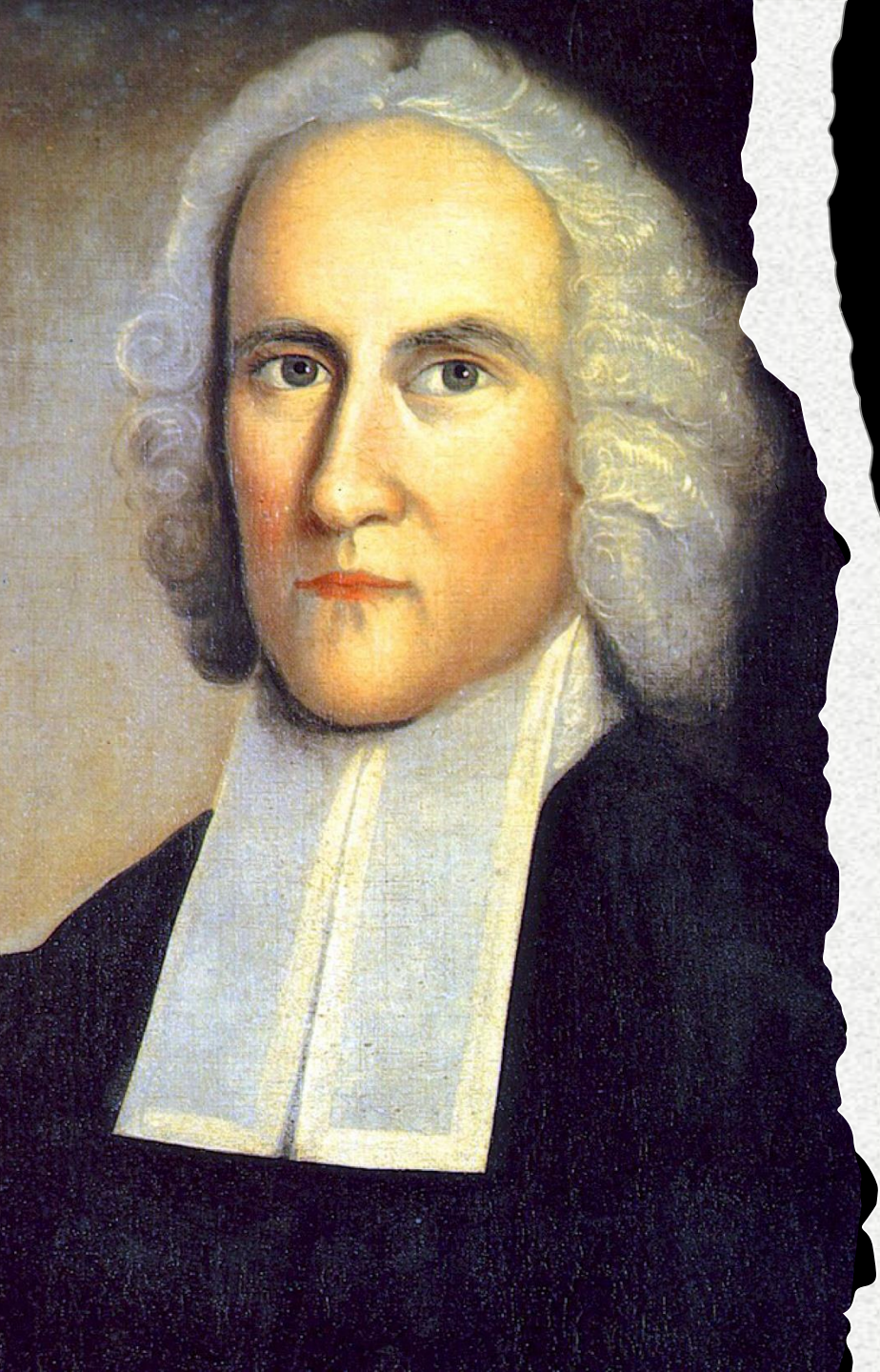
To study one's own self in the light of God's Word, and carefully to go over one's condition, examining both the inward and the outward sins, and using all the tests which are given us in the Scriptures, would be a very healthy exercise; but how very few care to go through it!

—Charles Spurgeon

2. The reasons we need them

Why do we need these practices?

- To better know our selves
- To better know our Lord



A true Christian . . . delights at times to retire from all mankind, to converse with God in solitude. And this also has peculiar advantages for fixing his heart and engaging his affections. True religion disposes persons to be much alone in solitary places for holy meditation and prayer.

—Jonathan Edwards

2. The reasons we need them

Why are they so difficult to observe?

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- **Overcrowded schedules**
- **Pervasive technology**



“Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still’ is a wise and healing counsel, but how can it be followed in this day of the newspaper, the telephone, the radio and the television? These modern playthings, like pet tiger cubs, have grown so large and dangerous that they threaten to devour us all. What was intended to be a blessing has become a positive curse. No spot is now safe from the world’s intrusion.

—A. W. Tozer

2. The reasons we need them

Why are they so difficult to observe?

- **Overcrowded schedules**
- **Pervasive technology**
- **Unintentional use of time**



3. How to put them in practice

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Lifestyle changes

- **Elimination: “You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life”
(Willard)**

Practicing the Way

Be with Jesus
Become like him
Do as he did

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The call to apprentice under Jesus is a call not to do more but to do less.

It's not addition but subtraction.

It's not about increasing complexity but about pursuing simplicity.

It's less about "habit stacking" than it is about learning to say no.

Jesus is calling you to slow down and simplify your life around the three goals of an apprentice: To be with [Jesus], become like him, and do as he did.

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To make apprenticeship to him the animating center of gravity for your entire life.

The elephant in the room is that the vast majority of us have far too much going on to “add” Jesus into our overly busy schedules. I’m so sorry, but I don’t know how to soften the blow: There is simply no way to follow Jesus without unhurrying your life.

—John Mark Comer

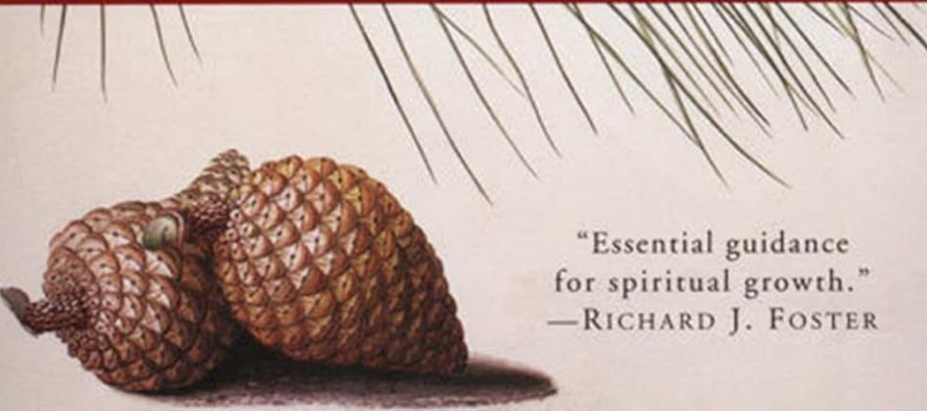
3. How to put them in practice

Lifestyle changes

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- **Training:** start small and build up to more



THE SPIRIT OF
THE DISCIPLINES
UNDERSTANDING HOW GOD CHANGES LIVES



"Essential guidance
for spiritual growth."
—RICHARD J. FOSTER

INCLUDING A NEW FOREWORD BY THE AUTHOR
DALLAS WILLARD

Silence is frightening because it strips us as nothing else does, throwing us upon the stark realities of our life. It reminds us of death, which will cut us off from this world and leave only us and God. And in that quiet, what if there turns out to be very little to “just us and God”?

—Dallas Willard

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 - **Daily quiet**
 - **Weekly sabbath**
 - **Seasonal retreat**

3. How to put them in practice

How to spend quiet time alone with God

- 1) Choose a time and place

3. How to put them in practice

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- 3) Rest your both body and soul (if needed, take a nap)
- 4) Be still, be quiet, and listen
- 5) Unburden your heart through prayer



To stay on the journey into solitude and silence...is to stay with the experience of seeing ourselves as we are in God's presence... In solitude we stop defending against the reality of our condition, we give up our attempts to control the outcomes of our journey... We let go of our attachment to the pieces of ourselves that we have allowed to define us. We endure the storm created by the old self as it frantically tries to maintain control...



Accompanying this self-awareness is a desperate desire for healing and communion that is painful in its intensity.... The silence that comes after the chaos is pregnant with the presence of God.

**—Ruth Hayley Barton,
*Invitation to Solitude and Silence***

3. How to put them in practice

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- 2) Begin with devotional reading and a prayer for help**
- 3) Rest your both body and soul (if needed, take a nap)**
- 4) Be still, be quiet, and listen**
- 5) Unburden your heart through prayer**
- 6) Plan for a slow re-entry back into life**

Summary

- 1. The disciplines of retreat**
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Retire from the world each day to some private spot, even if it be only the bedroom (for a while I retreated the furnace room for want of a better place). Stay in the secret place till the surrounding noises begin to fade out of your heart and a sense of God's presence envelops you. Deliberately tune out the unpleasant sounds and come out of your closet determined not to hear them. Listen for the inward Voice till you learn to recognize it. Stop trying to compete with others.



Give yourself to God and then be what and who you are without regard to what others think. Reduce your interests to a few. Don't try to know what will be of no service to you. Avoid the digest type of mind – short bits of unrelated facts, cute stories and bright sayings. Learn to pray inwardly every moment. After a while you can do this even while you work. Practice candor, childlike honesty, humility. Pray for a single eye. Read less, but read more of what is important to your inner life.



Never let your mind remain scattered for very long. Call home your roving thoughts. Gaze on Christ with the eyes of your soul. Practice spiritual concentration. All the above is contingent upon a right relation to God through Christ and daily meditation on the Scriptures. Lacking these, nothing will help us; granted these, the discipline recommended will go far to neutralize the evil effects of externalism and to make us acquainted with God and our own souls.

—A. W. Tozer

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