



Spiritual
DISCIPLINES

Meditation

Fasting

Prayer

Study

LENT BOOKLET 2021

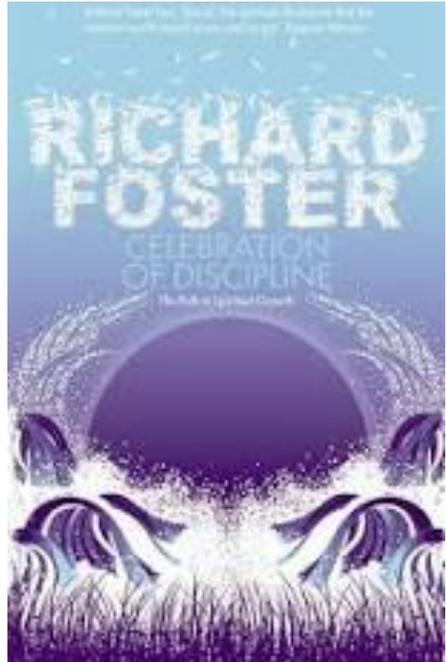
Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

During Lent this year we will be taking a look at four Spiritual Disciplines. This is a chance for us all to encourage a deeper engagement with God during the weeks before Easter. Based on ideas from a classic Christian book, *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster, we will be looking at inward disciplines of Meditation, Prayer, Study and Fasting. There are also some suggested daily Bible readings for each of these four disciplines which could be used as a Lent challenge.

Discipline is a word that for many of us will have an unpleasant feeling about it. Spiritual disciplines are not to do with punishment but to do with growing as a disciple of Jesus, developing a pattern of regular habits such as time with God, Bible reading, prayer and fellowship that encourage and support Christian living.

If we seek to follow Jesus' example and to become more like him, then spiritual disciplines should be an important part of our everyday lives and integral to how we live out our faith. Jesus spent time alone in prayer and prayed for others; he told his followers to fast and pray and knew and used Scriptures to reinforce his teaching. We all find it hard at times to stick to regular patterns of prayer and Bible reading, and Lent can be a time when instead of giving up

chocolate or television, we focus on taking up new practices and spending the time with God, when we might previously have been eating, watching the box sets or following Facebook.



In his book Richard Foster says that the Spiritual Disciplines are not just for spiritual giants but for ordinary people, for each one of us, designed to bring joy and liberation from self-interest and fears. It can be so easy for us to think only of ourselves, to be caught up in the world's materialism and our own desires. Spiritual disciplines help us to place ourselves where God can reach us and bless us as we put down deeper spiritual roots and grow closer towards him.

This Lent booklet will help us look at the following four “inward” disciplines:

Meditation

Listening to God, hearing his voice and obeying him;

Prayer

Communication with God that opens us to transformation by him.

Fasting

Helping us to focus on God.

Study

Allowing our minds to be transformed.

As well as the inward disciplines above that we will be looking at this Lent, Richard Forster describes the outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, service and submission, and the corporate disciplines of confession, worship, guidance and celebration. You may wish to read *Celebration of Discipline* if you have not already done so, or re-read if it is a book you have found helpful in the past. The ideas in this booklet are based around it and it is a “good read” and one that is helpful in growing and deepening discipleship.



During the 10.30am services on Sunday 21st & 28th February, 7th and 21st March, different preachers will also be looking at Bible passages relating to meditation, prayer, fasting and study. These services will be live-streamed and available on YouTube as usual.

We begin with Ash Wednesday and three days of preparation before we start to focus on the Spiritual Disciplines. These days focus on the temptations that Jesus faced and those we face ourselves. They are an opportunity to prepare ourselves for however God may wish to speak to us, and will help use to be ready to listen and respond.

Please use this booklet in whatever way you find useful this Lent. It may be that you want to read the suggested passages during the week; you may wish to share the ideas and reflection questions with others or use them for yourself. The Spiritual Disciplines are there to help us all grow in our relationship with God, and hopefully the ideas in this booklet will do just that. As you prepare to go into these weeks of Lent, you may wish to use the words of this song as a prayer:

**Jesus, take me as I am,
I can come no other way
Take me deeper into You,
Make my flesh life melt away
Make me like a precious stone,
Crystal clear and finely honed
Life of Jesus shining through,
Giving glory back to You**

LENT 2021 Temptation

As we start our journey through Lent we need to recognise that many things in our lives pull us away from God and prevent us from spending time with him.

Lent is an opportunity for us to reflect and to re-evaluate our priorities as we move toward the events of Holy Week and the celebration of Easter Day. We begin with looking at the issue of temptation. Ash Wednesday reminds us that Jesus faced a time of temptation before the start of his ministry. As we face our own temptations we do can become open to preparation for the things that God is calling us to.



"In contemporary society our Adversary majors in three things: noise, hurry, and crowds. If he can keep us engaged in "muchness" and "manyness," he will rest satisfied. Psychiatrist Carl Jung once remarked, "Hurry is not of the Devil; it is the Devil."

Richard Foster
in Celebration of Discipline

Ash Wednesday reading

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." ⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

⁵ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendour; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷ If you worship me, it will all be yours." ⁸ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

⁹ The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰ For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; ¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." ¹² Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

¹³ When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

An Ash Wednesday prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing that you have made and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may receive from you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

During the next three days, as we read about how Adam and Eve were tempted, we know that we too are tempted in so many ways, sometimes by the deceitful words of others, sometimes by our own desires. We can be encouraged by knowing that Jesus understands what it is to be tempted and by remembering that we do not face temptation alone, but with God at our side.

**Thursday reading:
The First Temptation
Genesis 3:1-13**

**Friday reading:
Warning and encouragement
1 Corinthians 10:11-13**

**Saturday reading:
Jesus tempted like us
Hebrews 4:14-16**

Questions to reflect on

1. How will you slow down this Lent and focus on God over the next few weeks. Are there any practical things that you can do to help you with this?
2. Do you find it encouraging that Jesus faced temptation? Do you think it was easier or harder for him than for us?
3. Think about some times when you have faced temptations. We all have times that we fail, but what can encourage us to keep on trying again? What has helped you overcome temptation in the past?
4. What did Jesus use to help him when he was tempted? How might this help you when things are tempting you away from God?

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

Hebrews 4:15

LENT 2021 WEEK 1
The Spiritual Disciplines:
Door to Liberation

“Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people. The classical Disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths. They invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm. They urge us to be the answer to a hollow world.”



Readings for the week:

Sunday	The longing to go deeper	Psalm 42
Monday	The slavery to ingrained habits	Psalm 51
Tuesday	The slavery to ingrained habits	Romans 7:13-25
Wednesday	The bankruptcy of outward righteousness	Philippians 3:1-16
Thursday	Sin in the bodily members	Proverbs 6:16-19
Friday	Sin in the bodily members	Romans 6:5-14
Saturday	The victory of Spiritual Discipline	Ephesians 6:10-20

“This is the way it is with the Spiritual Disciplines – they are a way of sowing to the Spirit. The Disciplines at God’s way of getting us into the ground: they put us where he can work within us and transform us. By themselves the Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing: they can only get us to the place where something can be done. They are God’s means of grace. The inner righteousness we seek is not something that is poured on our heads. God has ordained the Disciplines of the spiritual life as the mean by which we place ourselves where he can bless us.”

Richard Foster in Celebration of Discipline Chapter 1.

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
 Psalm 42:1-2

Passage of the week: Ephesians 6:10-20

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Questions to reflect on:

1. Can you think of any ways in which people are "superficial" ? Do you think there might be times when superficiality is a good thing?
2. Do you believe it is possible to transform our own lives? Why do you think this could be difficult?
3. What do you know about the spiritual disciplines? Do you think that "discipline" is a good word to use to describe them?
4. What part of God's armour do you feel that you need most at the moment? Use this prayer to encourage you during Lent.

Equip me, Lord with the belt of your truth in my heart and mind today. May truth be ever on my lips and may I live today as your disciple, clothed in the breastplate of righteousness. Please fit my feet with readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace, may I reflect your good news in all that I do and give me words from you to speak to others today. Help me to take up the shield of faith to extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one, and to trust in your promises and to remember that as I wear the helmet of salvation I am saved by your grace. May I wield the sword of the Spirit and the Word of God to protect me and help me stand firm for you. Help me to pray in the Spirit and to keep on praying throughout today.

LENT 2021 WEEK 2
The Spiritual Disciplines:
Meditation

“Christian meditation, very simply, is the ability to hear God’s voice and obey his word. It is that simple.” “In meditation we are growing into what Thomas a Kempis calls ‘a familiar friendship with Jesus.’ We are sinking down into the light and life of Christ and becoming comfortable in that posture...

...What happens in meditation is that we create the emotional and spiritual space which allows Christ to construct and inner sanctuary in the heart... the aim is to bring this living reality into all of life. It is a portable sanctuary that is brought into all we are and do.”

Richard Foster in
Celebration of Discipline,
 Chapter 2

Readings for the week:

Passage of the week:
Psalm 1:1-3

¹Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, ²but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. ³That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.

I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.
 Psalm 143:5



Sunday	The glory of meditation	Exodus 24:15-18
Monday	The friendship of Meditation	Exodus 33:11
Tuesday	The terror of meditation	Exodus 20:18-19
Wednesday	The object of meditation	Psalm 1:1-3
Thursday	The comfort of meditation	1 Kings 19:9-18
Friday	The insights of meditation	Acts 10:9-20
Saturday	The ecstasy of meditation	2 Corinthians 12:1-4

Questions to reflect on:

1. What things tend to make your life busy and crowded? What helps you find space amidst busyness?

2. Have you tried being still and meditating on words of scripture? Did you find it easy or difficult? What things helped you?

3. Have you experience any of these ways of meditating:
- imaginatively entering a story
- focussing on creation
- reflecting on current affairs
- remembering events of your day
Which of these do you prefer?

4. How do you think mediation could deepen your relationship with God? You might want to try this meditation exercise to help you.

Palms down: place the palms of your hands face down to symbolise your desire to give any concerns you have to God. When things come to mind pray and surrender them to God, releasing any feelings and emotions about your concerns to him.

Palms up: when you are ready turn your hands over with palms facing up to symbolise your desire to receive from God. As things that you need or wish to receive come to mind pray silently asking to receive

peace, love
for someone,
or whatever is
on your heart.



Palms still: when you are ready place your palms together in front of you to symbolise stillness and that you are listening to God. Stay like this silently for as long as you are comfortable, not asking or talking to God, but letting his love surround you and allowing him to speak to you.

Palms up: lift your hands up in the air, palms uppermost to symbolise that you are ready to go into the rest of your day praising God and obeying what he has said to you. You may wish to use this prayer to close your time with God.



Dear God, help me today to deepen my relationship with you, to grow in my friendship with Jesus and allow him to transform my heart. May I carry what I have heard from you into my day, help me to continue to listen carefully and to obey you. Teach me to meditate on your word day and night, and to allow the living water of your Spirit to refresh me.

LENT 2021 WEEK 3
The Spiritual Disciplines:
Prayer

“Prayer catapults us on to the frontier of the spiritual life. Of all the Spiritual Disciplines prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father. Meditation introduces us to the inner life, fasting is an accompanying means, study transforms our minds, but it is the Discipline of prayer that brings us into the deepest and highest work of the human spirit. Real prayer is life creating and life changing.”

“May I call you to the adventure of prayer – nothing draws us closer to the heart of God.”

Richard Foster in
Celebration of Discipline, Chapter 3

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and when to a solitary place, where he prayed.
 Mark 1:35

Readings for the week

Sunday	The pattern of prayer	Matthew 6:1-15
Monday	The prayer of worship	Psalm 103
Tuesday	The prayer of repentance	Psalm 51
Wednesday	The prayer of thanksgiving	Psalm 150
Thursday	The prayer of guidance	Matthew 26:36-46
Friday	The prayer of faith	James 5:13-18
Saturday	The prayer of command	Mark 9:14-29

Passage of the week:
Matthew 6:5-15

⁵“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹“This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us today our daily bread. ¹²And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. ¹⁴For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Questions to reflect on:

1. Have you ever experienced prayer changing your life? Do you know anyone else who has?
2. Prayer is a learning process. What things have you found helpful in encouraging your own prayer life? How have you learnt from the prayer life of others, either people that you know or those you have read or heard about?
3. Do you find it harder to pray for big issues or for the small everyday things? Why do you think that is?
4. Sometimes it is hard to keep going. What do you do when you don't feel like praying or it feels like God is not answering your prayers?

Something to try:

The missionary Frank Laubach said, *"I want to learn how to live so that to see someone is to pray for them."* Try doing that during this week. Ask God to help you see people with his eyes. If words or images come to mind when you see someone, God may be giving you spiritual insights to use in your prayers for them.

There are helpful resources to help daily disciplined prayer from the 24/7 prayer movement. You may want check them out at the website.

<https://www.24-7prayer.com/dailydevotional>

Two prayers to use this week:

**Thanks be to you,
our Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits
which you have given us,
for all the pains and insults
which you have borne for us.
Most merciful Redeemer, Friend
and Brother,
may we know you
more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly,
day by day.**

St Richard of Chichester

**Teach us, good Lord,
to serve you as you deserve;
to give and not to count the cost;
to fight and not to heed the
wounds;
to toil and not to seek for rest;
to labour and not to ask for any
reward,
save that of knowing
that we do your will.**

St. Ignatius of Loyola



LENT 2021 WEEK 4
The Spiritual Disciplines:
Fasting

“Some have exalted religious fasting beyond all Scripture and reason; and others have utterly disregarded it.” (John Wesley)

“Where are the people today who will respond to the call of Christ? Have we become so accustomed to ‘cheap grace’ that we instinctively shy away from more demanding calls to obedience? ‘Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross’. Why has the giving of money, for example, been unquestionably recognised as an element in Christian devotion and fasting so disputed? Certainly we have as much, if not more, evidence from the Bible for fasting as we have for giving. Perhaps in our affluent society fasting involves a far larger sacrifice than the giving of money.”

Richard Foster in
Celebration of Discipline
 Chapter 4

Readings for the week
Passages of the week:
Isaiah 58:5-8

⁵ Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

⁶ “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

⁸ Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

Sunday	The example of Christ	Luke 4:1-3
Monday	God’s chosen fast	Isaiah 58:1-8
Tuesday	A partial fast	Daniel 10:1-14
Wednesday	A normal fast	Nehemiah 1:4-11
Thursday	An absolute fast	Esther 4:12-17
Friday	The start of the Gentile mission	Acts 13:1-3
Saturday	The appointment of elders in the churches	Acts 14:19-23

Matthew 6:16-18

¹⁶ “When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”



“Fasting is voluntarily giving up something we normally consume or do so that we can increase our focus on God. Most commonly, fasting is linked to food and can mean not eating, or giving up a specific food for a period of time. Fasting is an act of worship - we show Jesus that we love Him more than our own comfort.” (From 24/7 prayer)

Questions to reflect on:

1. Have you ever tried fasting? What is different from spiritual fasting, dieting and going on hunger strike?
2. Why do you think that John Wesley required every minister he ordained to regularly fast for two days a week? Do you think that this is a practical requirement for Christians today?
3. How can fasting from things other than food show what controls your life or is most important to you?
4. What could you do in response to Jesus' command to his disciples “When you fast...”? What might make this difficult for you and what steps could you put in place to help make it possible?

Please be aware that for health reasons total food fasts for a day or more aren't recommended for anyone under 16, expectant or breast-feeding mothers, or anyone with a medical disorder affected by diet like diabetes. Food fasts should not be entered into by anyone with a history of eating disorders.

Fasting should be a positive dedication to God, so consider your motivation for fasting carefully before committing to it.

LENT 2021 WEEK 5
Spiritual Disciplines:
Study

“The purpose of the Spiritual Disciplines is the total transformation of the person. They aim at replacing old destructive habits of thought with new life-giving habits. Nowhere is this purpose more clearly seen than in the Discipline of study. The apostle Paul tells us that we are transformed through the renewal of the mind (Rom 12:2). The mind is renewed by applying it to those things that will transform it.”

Richard Foster in
Celebration of Discipline
 Chapter 5.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
 Proverbs 9:10

Readings for the week

Passage of the week:
Colossians 3:12-17

¹² Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Sunday	The call to study	Proverbs 1:1-9
Monday	The source of truth	Hebrews 4:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17
Tuesday	What to study	Colossians 3:1-17
Wednesday	The value of study	Luke 10:38-42
Thursday	Active study	James 1:19-25
Friday	Study and evangelism	Acts 17:1-3 & 10-12
Saturday	Study of the non-verbal	Proverbs 24:30-34

Questions to reflect on:

1. What do you think that study is? How might it differ from meditation?

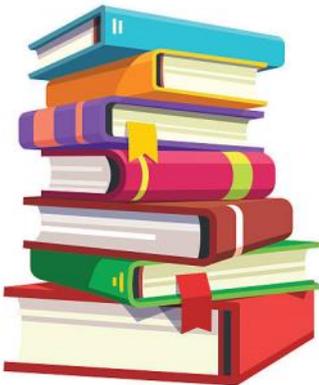
2. Richard Foster describes four steps involved in study

- repetition
- concentration
- comprehension
- reflection

Which of these do you find easier or harder? He also says that humility is essential, can you think of why this might be important?.

3. Have you tried studying non-verbal things? How might studying a tree or a plant deepen your learning about God?

4. Can you think of books that have helped your Christian learning? What would you recommend as a “good read” to someone else?



To help you study a passage from the Bible:

1. Pray before you begin.

2. Check the context – who wrote it and when, a study Bible can be useful.

3. Read and think of or write down three things the author is saying

4. Think about what the author's meaning is. Why are they saying these things?

5. Does the passage remind you of anything else in the Bible?

6. Is there anything you find hard to understand? Why do you think this might be?

7. How does this passage fit with your own experience?

8. What might God be trying to say to you?

9. Who can I share my ideas with?

10. Pray again, thank God for any insights and ask for his help with any actions you need to take.

There are useful tools such as Bible dictionaries, commentaries and other books that can help you. Ask for advice if you need it, we are all learners and one of the best ways of studying is to do it with others, perhaps in a small group.

SERVICES FOR LENT & EASTER

Ash Wednesday	17th February	7:30 pm
Mothering Sunday	14th March	10:30 am
Palm Sunday	28th March	10:30 am
Maundy Thursday	1st April	7:30 pm
Good Friday	2nd April	12 Noon
Easter Sunday	4th April	10:30 am

All the above are live in Church & online

Easter Praise	4th April	5:30 pm online only
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