

Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church Practicing the Spiritual Disciplines

The spiritual disciplines of Prayer, Bible Study, Fasting, and Worship are critical to the overall spiritual development of believers. If we fail to practice these disciplines, we will fail to reap the spiritual benefits they provide in our daily lives.

This handout is a "How To" guide for implementing the spiritual disciplines into your life. We will use the acronym "G.R.O.W." as a tool to help us. G.R.O.W stands for:

- **G**o to God Daily in Prayer
- **R**ead God's Word Daily
- **O**bey God Moment by Moment
- **W**orship God with Your Life.

Go to God Daily in Prayer.

Prayer is communication with God. How exactly does a person pray? Jesus gave us an example of how to pray in Matthew 6:9-13. From His example we learn that prayer has at least 5 elements:

- Praise & Thanksgiving – Take time to recognize God's greatness and thank him for what he provides in your life.
- Prayer for God's will - Pray that God's plan is accomplished in your life and the lives of others.
- Petition - God loves you and wants to provide for you when you ask him.
- Forgiveness - As you examine your life daily and recall your deeds, you should pray and ask God to forgive you of your sins.
- Protection - You must recognize that evil desires may tempt you and ask God to keep you safe from evil.

Prayer is not limited to a time or place, formal speech, or posture. We must be ourselves and speak to God with respect and reverence. Be sure also to spend time in meditation, listening for God's voice to speak to your heart.

Read God's Word Daily

To help us grow in our relationships with God, He has given us the Bible and it tells us all we need to know about Him. Reading God's Word daily helps us learn about Him and what he requires in our lives. Here are some points to help get you started:

Get a Study Bible. The King James Version (KJV) Study Bible, the New King James Version (NKJV) Study Bible, or the New International Version (NIV) Study Bible are all good tools to help in daily study. They all have notes to explain the scriptures, references, glossaries with definitions, indexes, and concordances to help you find things by key word or topic.

When reading the Bible remember these keys:

- Pray for guidance and understanding. We should always invite the Holy Spirit into our time of study.
- Determine what you will study. The Bible can be studied by book, character, chapter, or topic. Sunday School books have daily reading plans that are connected to the weekly lesson. It may also be helpful to study the passages introduced in weekly sermons and Bible Study to gain greater understanding.
- Observe the scriptures. That simply means to look closely at the information the scriptures provide. In Observation we answer the question "What does it say?"
- Interpret the scriptures. Once we know what the scriptures say, we must answer the question "What does it mean?" What did the scripture mean to the writer and the readers?
- Apply the scriptures. When we know what the scriptures say and what they mean, we can then answer the question "How does it apply to my life?" The lessons and examples we see in the scriptures must be applied to our lives to have value.

Don't be afraid to write in your Bible. It's the text book for the rest of your life! So take notes, and underline or "star" important passages to make them easier to find later.

Obey God Moment by Moment

God's Word has commandments we must learn to follow. The greatest commandments are found in Matthew 22.

Matthew 22:37-40(NKJV) ³⁷ Jesus said to him, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*” ³⁸ This is *the first and great commandment.* ³⁹ And *the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’* ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

The short version is: Love God. Love People. To help us stay disciplined in obeying God and keeping his commandments, we examine ourselves through Fasting. Fasting is an exercise in spiritual self evaluation. When we fast we afflict our souls, examine our hearts and our actions, confess our sins, and become closer to Christ. Here are some basic instructions for Fasting:

- Pray for God's guidance in fasting.
- Declare your fast. Set a time between you and God. It may be a portion of the day, a complete day, or multiple days.
- Determine what you will withhold. Some fasts are complete absence from food while others may only involve certain types of food. For example, in Daniel chapters 9 and 10 we see two examples of fasting. In chapter 10 Daniel describes the foods he abstained from.
- Abstaining from the food is designed to afflict the person and make them uncomfortable. ****If you have special dietary and medical circumstances, please consult your physician before fasting.****
- Be sure to choose a time for fasting when prayer and scripture reading can happen. Examine your life through prayer and the scriptures while fasting.
- Use fasting as a time to increase your devotion to God, and confession of sins. Allow God to reveal areas for improvement in your life.

Fasting helps us get closer to God and become more like him. When we fast and pray hearing his voice according to his word, God prunes us and causes us to grow.

Worship God with Your Life

Worship is a spiritual activity. Worship is our response to the presence of God. When we see our favorite team we react inside with good feelings and motivation. When we are aware of what God is doing in our lives we must also respond with praise.

1. Read God's Word to learn about the things he does for us as well as how great and wonderful he is. This will make it easier to acknowledge his blessings in your life.
2. Expand your worship. Don't limit your worship to Sundays between 10:45 and 12:30. Worship where ever you are and whenever you are. Express yourself and your true feelings toward God. Sing, clap, dance, shout, and give thanks and praise.
3. Practice the presence of God. Become spiritually conscious. We leave church and sometimes forget about God. We are not conscious of the fact that he is always with us. Stay prayerful, stay in touch with God, and stay connected.
4. Come out of your spiritual closet. Jesus said the things God told us in the secret place should be proclaimed from the rooftops. Tell others about the great things God has done for you. Give God the credit for all that he does in your life. Use every victory in your life as a testimony to magnify his name.

Practice makes perfect. Apply these disciplines to your life so you can G.R.O.W. in your relationship with God.