

## A Simple Overview of the Spiritual Disciplines

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In his book [The Spirit of the Disciplines](#), Dallas Willard describes spiritual disciplines in two categories – abstinence and engagement. He says, “the disciplines of abstinence must be counterbalanced and supplemented by the disciplines of engagement. Abstinence and engagement are the *out breathing* and *in breathing* of our spiritual lives. Roughly speaking the disciplines of abstinence counteract tendencies to sins of commission and disciplines of engagement counteract tendencies to sins of omission.

There is no comprehensive list of spiritual disciplines that the church has confirmed. As you read the ancient fathers and mothers you will find varying disciplines that were used at different times. For our purposes, we will describe and practice some basic disciplines of abstinence and engagement. For a more thorough exposure to the spiritual disciplines, in addition to Willard’s [The Spirit of the Disciplines](#), refer to Richard Fosters, [Celebration of Discipline](#).

### DISCIPLINES OF ABSTINENCE

- **Solitude** - choosing to be alone. In stark aloneness it is possible to have silence, to be still, and to know that Jehovah indeed is God, to set the Lord before our minds with sufficient intensity and duration that we stay centered upon him – our hearts fixed, established in trust, no matter what.
- **Silence** - closing off our souls from “sounds,” whether those sounds be noise, music or words. Think what it says about the inward emptiness of our lives if we must always turn on the tape player or radio to make sure something is happening around us.
- **Fasting** - using the pleasure of food and drink to assuage the discomforts caused in our bodies by faithless and unwise living and attitudes – lack of self-worth, meaningless work, purposeless existence, or lack of rest or exercise.

### DISCIPLINES OF ENGAGEMENT

- **Study** - we read, inquire, meditate, and listen to God’s Spirit speak through His word.
- **Worship** - focusing on God’s worthiness and being met by God as we adore Him.
- **Service** - what does it look like for me to serve others to train myself away from arrogance, possessiveness, envy, resentment, or covetousness?
- **Prayer** - co-laboring with God to accomplish His purposes, release His power, be changed by intimate communication with Him, and see His specific answers to our specific requests.
- **Fellowship** - reciprocal interaction with other disciples in worship, study, prayer, celebration and service.
- **Confession** - deep transparency in fellowship with trusted believers resulting in healing and redemption; sometimes restitution appropriately follows confession.