SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Teacher’s Manual

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### OBJECTIVES

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### OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, the participants should:

• know, understand, and appreciate the purpose and importance of spiritual disciplines

• develop the discipline of regularly reading, reflecting on and responding to God's Word

• be inspired to pursue a growing and vibrant relationship with God through spiritual disciplines

**OVERVIEW**

Session 1: **Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines**

Session 2: **The Discipline of God's Word**

Session 3: **The Discipline of Prayer I**

Session 4: **The Discipline of Prayer II**

Session 5: **The Discipline of Prayer III**

Session 6: **The Discipline of Fasting**

# THINGS TO KNOW

[Important notes for the teacher/s of this course]

This course explores the importance of understanding the purpose and importance of spiritual disciplines such as reading the Bible, prayer, and fasting.

# In this teacher's manual, students' notes are enclosed in boxes for easy reference. The blanks in the students' manual have been filled in this manual. However, spaces for notes in the students' manual have been removed from this teacher's manual. Also, notes enclosed in brackets in this manual are guidelines or recommendations for teachers.

This course has a total of six sessions of 60 minutes (maximum) per session. All the sessions have video courses with Bishop Manny Carlos as the speaker. The first day will comprise of sessions 1 to 3, and the rest of the sessions (4 to 6) will be at the second day. The local center has the discretion to either show all the videos, or use the videos as teacher's resource. Each video is about twenty-five minutes long. If the center prefers a live teacher, ***the center needs to show the required videos for sessions 1 and 6***. Example:

***Day 1***

*Session 1 Show video*

*Session 2­­­ Live teacher*

*Session 3 Live teacher*

***Day 2***

*Session 4 Live teacher*

*Session 5­­­ Live teacher*

*Session 6 Show video*

The general structure to be followed for each session includes: teaching, application (through discussion questions), class processing, and activity (when applicable). Please note that the discussions and activities may be revised based on context and location. More time may be allotted for the activity. Most discussions and activities are done in small groups. Removing the application and activities to give way for a longer teaching session is not recommended. Class processing is done at the end of the application (discussion questions) to gauge individual learnings and possibly answer questions the participants might have. A ten-minute break should be given after every session.

The goal is to be engaging and dynamic by creating variety in content delivery during teaching.

Deviation from teaching notes comes with preparation and mastery. All teachers are encouraged to vary the methods of teaching, but not at the expense of omitting content by adding extra-biblical material. Allow for participants to interact with the material and with the other participants, thus giving way to discussion, activities, and application.

As a teacher, focus your preparation time on communicating the key points of each session and giving examples or illustrations that will inspire and encourage the participants. Not all the provided illustrations from the teacher's notes have to be used, and others may be substituted for more relevant or personal illustrations.

It is highly recommended that Scripture narratives used in explaining points be delivered by storytelling, whereas short verses may simply be read verbatim to support the validity of key thoughts. Please note that the students' manual uses the ESV Bible translation.

Also, a list of logistical needs is provided for some sessions so the teacher and administrative staff or volunteer can adequately prepare all videos, supplies, and materials ahead of time.

Lastly, a simple evaluation form is provided at the end of this course. Please allow for participants to fill this out and submit by the end of the final session. This will help provide feedback for improvement and future implementation of the course.

### SUGGESTED TIME ALLOTMENT PER TOPIC

*[Please allow for flexibility in the time allotment.]*

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| **DAY 1** | | |
| SESSION 1 | DURATION | TOPIC |
| **Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines** | 5 minutes | Welcome and Introduction |
| 25 minutes | Video |
| 10 minutes | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 10 minutes | Break |
| SESSION 2 |  |  |
| **The Discipline of**  **God's Word** | 25 minutes | Video or Lecture by a Live Teacher |
| 25 minutes | Activity (S.O.A.P. Bible Study Method) |
| 10 minutes | Break |
| SESSION 3 |  |  |
| **The Discipline of Prayer I** | 25 minutes | Video or Lecture by a Live Teacher |
| 10 minutes | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 10 minutes | Activity (Praying for Church Events) |
| 5 minutes | End of Day 1 |
| **DAY 2** | | |
| SESSION 4 |  |  |
| **The Discipline of Prayer II** | 25 minutes | Video or Lecture by a Live Teacher |
| 10 minutes | Application |
| 10 minutes | Activity (Think-Pair-Share: Praying the Scripture) |
| 10 minutes | Break |
| SESSION 5 |  |  |
| **The Discipline of Prayer III** | 25 minutes | Video or Lecture by a Live Teacher |
| 10 minutes | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 10 minutes | Break |
| SESSION 6 |  |  |
| **The Discipline of Fasting** | 25 minutes | Video |
| 10 minutes | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 5 minutes | End of Spiritual Disciplines |

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# Session 1 – INTRODUCTION TO THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

### LOGISTICAL NEEDS

* video course by Bishop Manny Carlos

### BACKGROUND of the speaker

Manny Carlos is the chairman of Victory, Philippines and serves as a bishop and has been a pastor for over twenty-eight years. He is passionate about reaching and training the future leaders of the nation who are in the university and college campuses. In 1995, he and a team of leaders helped establish a growing congregation in Quezon City that continues to reach thousands of students from the University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University, and other surrounding campuses.

Manny graduated with a BS degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of the Philippines in 1983 and holds a Master’s degree in Business Administration from the University of Virginia. After working for a number of years with various multinational corporations, he entered full-time pastoral ministry in 1988.

As a bishop and pastor, he serves on the Asia Leadership Team and International Apostolic Team of Every Nation. He also serves on several boards in various ministries in the Philippines.

Manny is married to Mini Yuzon-Carlos and they have four children: Jeremy, Daniel, Hannah, and Samuel.

### WELCOME AND introduction (5 MINUTES)

[Welcome the participants to this course. Begin with a time of prayer and invite the Holy Spirit to be with you. Then briefly introduce the course objectives and an overview of each session. The teacher should briefly introduce the teacher/s or speaker/s for this course. Encourage the participants to bring their Bibles during each session.]

### LECTURE (25 MINUTES)

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| 1. The spiritual disciplines are attitudes and practices designed to strengthen (1) our relationship with God.  *. . . Rather train yourself for godliness . . .*  1 TIMOTHY 4:7 |

### EXPLANATION

“A discipline for the spiritual life is…an activity undertaken to bring us into more effective cooperation with Christ and His Kingdom.” **[[1]](#footnote-1)**

The spiritual disciplines we will examine in this course are God’s Word, prayer, praise and worship, and fasting.

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| 2. The spiritual disciplines must be cultivated (2) by investing time and energy. |

### EXPLANATION

The disciples saw in Jesus much that they wanted and did not have. They discerned that much of His power came through prayer. Therefore, they asked to be taught. “One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.’” (Luke 11:1)

The spiritual disciplines begin as a decision, and they continue as a lifetime habit. Jesus did not say that His disciples were those who began in His Word but those who continued in His Word. “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, ‘If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples indeed.’” (John 8:31)

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| 3. Self-discipline is training and controlling our self and our conduct for personal improvement (3) and growth.**[[2]](#footnote-2)** A self-disciplined way of life is at the very core of being a disciple of Christ. |

### EXPLANATION

Self-discipline is the decision to do the same things every day no matter how mundane.

Self-discipline is any activity carried on to prepare us indirectly for some other activity. For example, we do not practice the piano so that we may practice the piano well. We practice the piano so that we may play well in a concert. The repeated practice develops our responsiveness for the actual performance. We do not discipline our bodies through fasting so that we will be good at fasting. We do it so that we will be more attentive to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Self-discipline is the ability to defer immediate gratification for long-term results.

Self-discipline is the willingness to do the things no one else wants to do.

Self-discipline is the commitment to develop productive habits.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus warned His disciples to *“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”* (Matthew 26:41) The disciples did not heed this command; they did not discipline themselves. Immediately afterward, when Jesus was arrested, all the disciples deserted Him. The implication is that, had they obeyed God and disciplined themselves, they would have been spiritually strong when faced with the temptation to abandon the Lord.

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| **Three Purposes of Spiritual Disciplines**  1. To know God (4) |

### EXPLANATION

Christianity is first and foremost a relationship with God, not a set of rules and regulations. The spiritual disciplines are means to bring us into deeper interaction with God and His kingdom.

“The goal of spiritual life is the experience and enjoyment of active relationship with God in all areas of daily life.” **[[3]](#footnote-3)**

The goal of prayer, reading the Bible, fasting, etc. is to know God better. *“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better.”* (Ephesians 1:17)

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| 2. To make us more like Christ (5) |

### EXPLANATION

*. . . for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.* (1 Timothy 4:8)

Godliness is a biblical term that is synonymous with Christ-likeness and holiness. It is the sum total of all genuine religion. **[[4]](#footnote-4)** It includes veneration, affection, submission, gratitude, and obedience. **[[5]](#footnote-5)** It is an attitude and lifestyle that seeks to live wholly in accordance with God’s will. **[[6]](#footnote-6)**

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| 3. To continually be empowered by the Holy Spirit (6) |

### EXPLANATION

The spiritual disciplines are not means to attain righteousness; righteousness is a gift from God. Instead, these activities are channels for God’s transforming power to flow through us.

“Certain disciplines and practices help us keep the spiritual channels open and help keep our heart turned toward God. These disciplines can’t save us; they can’t even make us holy. But they can heighten our desire, awareness, and love of God by stripping down the barriers that we put up within ourselves.” **[[7]](#footnote-7)**

After forty days of fasting, Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit’s power to do God’s will. God’s grace is always sufficient for us, but the spiritual disciplines prepare us to receive that grace. Even Jesus, before beginning his public ministry, was empowered by the Holy Spirit. The prerequisite to developing a lifestyle of spiritual discipline is to perceive the need and receive the available empowering of the Spirit to do what God has required of us.

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| The Holy Spirit initiates, energizes, and maintains the spiritual disciplines in our lives. However, He does it in partnership with our continuous choice to discipline ourselves. |

### EXPLANATION

*For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, 7 for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

(2 Timothy 1:6,7)

Because the disciplines can quickly degenerate into works for righteousness, we emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit as a safeguard against that possibility.

Paul described the manifestation of the Spirit’s work in our lives as power, love, and self-discipline. However, Paul qualified his own statement by placing it in the context of Timothy’s responsibility to fan the gift into flames.

It is God’s responsibility to impart the gifts and our responsibility to develop the gifts (by the Holy Spirit) so that we are empowered to accomplish God’s will.

“Are you reading your Bible?” "How is your prayer life?” “When was the last time you fasted?” These are all good questions and ones that often give us insight into how to unravel most problems in the life of a disciple. But these same questions can also spiral into accusation and condemnation. We must learn how to identify and tap into the “grace of discipline” as we are endued by the Holy Spirit.

“The experience of the Spirit is . . . the key essential player in the believers’ experiencing and living out the salvation that God has brought about in Christ. The Spirit both forms the church into God’s new people and conforms them into Christ’s image through His fruit in their lives; and the Spirit gifts them in worship to edify and encourage one another in their ongoing life in the world.” **[[8]](#footnote-8)**

The Holy Spirit is the prime instrument in our sanctification—the process by which we become like Christ.

It is important that we understand the absolute enabling of God, not only in salvation and justification, but in our sanctification as well. Included in this sanctification are the means and the grace to be more like Christ in order to do the things that Christ did.

“No discipline is able to create or start one’s relationship with God. Nothing we do can do that, Christ did it already. No discipline can earn us heavenly brownie points, because there are no such brownie points to earn. No discipline can make us more valuable as persons, or make us inherently more of a leader.” **[[9]](#footnote-9)**

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| **Turning the Disciplines into Life**  1. We do not earn God’s grace through the disciplines (7), but we do put ourselves in a place where God can change us by His Holy Spirit. |

### EXPLANATION

The disciplines are a narrow ledge, and we are in danger of falling off either side. On one side we can become passive and not do the disciplines at all. On the other side we can strive for righteousness and make the disciplines into law.

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| Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for confusing their disciplines with life. (Matthew 23:1-4; John 5:39-40) |

*1Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, 2“The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, 3so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. 4They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.* (Matthew 23:1-4)

*"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me . . ."* (John 5:39)

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| 2. We must be ever vigilant (8) not to convert disciplines into law but to allow them to be what they were intended to be: life and freedom. (2 Corinthians 3:6) |

### EXPLANATION

*“He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”* (2 Corinthians 3:6)

*"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* (Matthew 11:29)

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| **Three Steps to Developing Right Habits**  1. Discontinue wrong habits (9).  *When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.*  1 CORINTHIANS 13:11 |

### EXPLANATION

Those habits can include appetites for amusement, entertainment, and diversions that keep us children. Development of right appetites is an indicator of maturity.

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| • Procrastination (10) is the first wrong habit we must break. (John 4:35) |

### EXPLANATION

Children can find any and every creative reason not to be obedient in a timely manner. Some of their favorite sayings are: “Later” and “In a minute.” However, convenient obedience is no obedience at all.

*“Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”* (John 4:35)

Procrastination is one of the most effective weapons of the devil directed toward the life of discipline.

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| • Distraction (11) is the second wrong habit we must break. (2 Corinthians 11:3) |

### EXPLANATION

*But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ*. (2 Corinthians 11:3)

The word "distract" means to cause to turn away from the original focus of attention or interest. Scripture continually exhorts us to tune out the noisy distractions of the world and focus on the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit.

We live in a culture of noise—a culture filled with the spiritually deafening hum of television, music, and computer bleeps and boinks.

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| 2. Make a Spirit-energized decision (12) to put God first in our lives. |

### EXPLANATION

A life of self-discipline begins with a quality decision—a decision initiated and sustained by the Holy Spirit, not by our own will power.

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| 3. Commit to a specific time and a specific place (13) to meet with God every day.  (Habakkuk 2:1) |

*I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint.* (Habakkuk 2:1)

In conclusion, as we cultivate (by the power of the Holy Spirit) the spiritual disciplines, we will increase in our knowledge of God, will be changed ever more into His image, and will be empowered continually by the Holy Spirit within.

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| application (10 minutes) [The teacher may choose just one question and ask the participants to answer it by discussing within their groups. Class processing will be done after their discussion.]   1. Since self-discipline is the decision to do the same things every day no matter how mundane, how do you think self-discipline relates to the spiritual disciplines? Why do you personally find it difficult to do the same things every day? What are some of the ways you motivate yourself to do the same things every day? 2. Since self-discipline is also the ability to defer immediate gratification for long-term results, how do you think self-discipline relates to the spiritual disciplines? Why is it difficult to defer immediate gratification? What are some of the ways you motivate yourself to defer immediate gratification? 3. How can knowing the purposes of the spiritual disciplines help you be more consistent in practicing them? Which of the three purposes listed in the session motivates you the most to practice the spiritual disciplines? Why? 4. The disciplines are a narrow ledge, and we are in danger of falling off either side. On one side we can become passive and not do the disciplines at all. On the other side we can strive for righteousness and make the disciplines into law. Which of the two extremes are you more prone to: passivity or striving? Why? How has your relationship with the Holy Spirit helped you to navigate this narrow ledge? 5. What is the major distraction in your life that keeps you from practicing the spiritual disciplines? What one thing can you do differently to help you resist that distraction? |

### CLASS PROCESSING (5 MINUTES)

### [At this point, the teacher will ask two to three participants to share what they have discussed in the group discussion during the application.]

### BREAK (10 MINUTES)

# Session 2 – THE DISCIPLINE OF GOD'S WORD

### LOGISTICAL NEEDS

* video course by Bishop Manny Carlos (if there's no live teacher)
* S.O.A.P. Bible Study Method handouts and blank handouts to be filled out by the participants (For this activity at the end of this session, please download the files from this link: http://www.everynationseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/The-SOAP-Method-handout.pdf)

### lecture (25 minutes)

The first spiritual discipline we will examine in this course is the Word of God. The Bible is the only written revelation God has given to man. It is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. It reveals who God is and what He has planned for His creation.

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| **Three Attitudes Toward God’s Word**  1. Desperation (1)  *. . . “‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”*  MATTHEW 4:4 |

### EXPLANATION

Bread was the basic food of the Jews, the staple of their diet. It was present at every meal. So the Word of God is the staple of our diet; without it we will not survive.

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| 2. Devotion (2)  *And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*  ACTS 2:42 |

### EXPLANATION

Immediately after Pentecost, the new believers began devoting themselves to the Word of God. The first recorded fruit of the new birth was devotion to God’s Word. This should be the norm for all new believers.

The phrase continually devoting in this passage is translated from the original Greek word *proskartereo*. It means to be steadfastly attentive to, to give unremitting care to, to continue unceasingly with great intensity and single-mindedness.

A great example of *proskartereo* is Clubber Lang, Rocky’s antagonist in the movie Rocky III. Clubber Lang was single-minded in his devotion to the supreme object of his life: to be the heavy weight champion of the world. In one memorable scene, Lang described his focused life to a group of reporters, “I live alone, I train alone, and when I win the title, I’ll win the title alone.” The reporters asked him, “Do you hate Rocky Balboa?” Lang responded, “No, but I pity the fool. And I will destroy anyone who stands in my way.” The reporters continued, “What is your prediction for the fight?” “Pain, I predict pain.”

*“Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You*.” (Psalm 119:11) To treasure means to hoard in great quantities for future use.

When a community is threatened by a severe storm or hurricane, there is always a mad rush to hoard essential commodities. People will stand in line for hours and endure any inconvenience to insure that they will not run short of what they need to live. This is the attitude of desperation that David expressed in this Psalm: he would endure any inconvenience to store up the Word of God in his heart.

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| 3. Delight (3)  *Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts.*  JEREMIAH 15:16 |

### EXPLANATION

The original Hebrew word translated “joy” means “a state of joyful exuberance.” The original Hebrew word translated “delight” refers to the jubilant mirth associated with attending a festival.

When Jeremiah said, *“your words became to me”* he was referring to a process. This kind of delight in God’s Word does not come overnight. It is developed by continual habit. It is a process.

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| **God’s Word and Our Devotional Life**  1. We read (4) the Bible in our devotional life.  John Wesley gave several tips for effective Bible reading:   * Set apart time every morning and evening for the purpose of reading. * Read with a determination to know the whole will of God and with a steady resolution to do it. * Pray seriously and earnestly before consulting the Word of God. * Pause frequently and examine your heart and life by what you read. * Whatever light you receive should be used immediately. Let there be no delay. Whatever you resolve, begin to execute the first moment you can. |

### EXPLANATION

The first and primary way we ingest the Word is through reading. Reading the Bible gives us a general overview of God’s Word. It also gives God a medium to speak to us, either during the reading, or later when the Holy Spirit quickens appropriate verses.

The Bible can be read using the fast method or the slow method. Each method has a different purpose and objective.

The purpose of the fast method is to gain an overall understanding of the historical development and message of the Bible. The objective is knowledge.

The purpose of the slow method is to reflect deeply on smaller sections of the Bible. The objective is understanding.

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| John Wesley gave several tips for effective Bible reading:[[10]](#footnote-10)   * Set apart time every morning and evening for the purpose of reading. * Read with a determination to know the whole will of God and with a steady resolution to do it. * Pray seriously and earnestly before consulting the Word of God. * Pause frequently and examine your heart and life by what you read. * Whatever light you receive should be used immediately. Let there be no delay. Whatever you resolve, begin to execute the first moment you can. |

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| 2. We meditate (5) on the Bible in our devotional life. (Psalm 1:2,3) |

### EXPLANATION

*“But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”* (Psalm 1:2,3)

To meditate means “to ponder or muse; to engage in deep reflection; to weigh in the mind with painstaking thoroughness; to consider carefully and at length; to turn over again and again in the mind.”

Some believers are apprehensive of this spiritual exercise because of its association with Eastern religions. There is, however, a qualitative difference between Eastern meditation and biblical meditation. The goal of Eastern meditation is to empty the mind of all rational thought through the endless repetition of syllables or sounds. The goal of biblical meditation is to renew the mind by filling it with God’s Word.

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| 3. We memorize (6) the Bible in our devotional life.  *I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.*  PSALM 119:11 |

### EXPLANATION

Jesus obviously memorized Scripture because He was able to defeat the devil in the wilderness (with no scrolls readily available) by quoting the Bible.

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| The following are some tips for memorization: [[11]](#footnote-11)   * Memorize verses that relate to what God is currently saying to you. * Read the verse aloud and write it out, many times if necessary. * Write out the verse with the reference on a “flash card.” * Always memorize verses word perfect. * Emphasize key words in the verse when quoting. |

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| 4. We obey (7) the Bible in our devotional life. (James 1:22)  *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*  JAMES 1:22 |

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| When reading the Bible, there are several questions we should ask about the text:   * Does it reveal an attitude to change or a sin to forsake? * Does it reveal a specific promise to claim? * Does it reveal an example to follow? * Does it reveal a command to obey? |

### ACTIVITY (25 minutes)

[Ask the admins to distribute the S.O.A.P. handouts and the blank handouts at this point.]

**Instruction (5 minutes)**

If there’s one habit we could develop, it's the discipline of reading God's Word. We can start with S.O.A.P. (Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer) Bible study method. S.O.A.P. is a method of Bible reading and journaling. It can be used with any daily Bible reading plan.

How does it work?

It's quite simple. When you sit for your daily quiet time, read the Bible as you normally would with one simple difference. Underline or make note of any verses that jump out at you with special significance. This is the basis for diving deeper and using S.O.A.P.

[For this activity, let's use the following Bible chapter: Psalm 1:1-3]

**S** for Scripture **(5 minutes)**  
Read slowly and thoughtfully through a portion of Scripture. Pick a verse or two that stood out to you and write it in your journal.

**O** for Observation **(5 minutes)**  
Now write some observations about the verse/s. What is this passage saying? What was God's message to them? What does it teach about God? What is God's message to you? How is Christ revealed in this?

**A** for Application **(5 minutes)**  
Now write a few sentences on how this passage applies to your life. Is there truth about God that you are to believe? Is there a promise to receive and thank God for? Is the Holy Spirit convicting you of something you need to do or stop doing in light of God’s truth?

[Instead of praying, you may use this time to ask the participants to share their observations and application with a partner for three minutes. Afterward, you may ask one or two participants to share what they have written in their notes in front of the class.]

### BREAK (10 MINUTES)

# Session 3 – THE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER I

### LOGISTICAL NEEDS

* video course by Bishop Manny Carlos (if there's no live teacher)
* Prayer Guide handouts

### lecture (25 minutes)

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| **Living a Life of Prayer**  1. Prayer is a time to commune (1) with God. |

### EXPLANATION

The primary purpose of prayer is communion with God. *“You were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (1 Corinthians 1:9)

Our first calling is to fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Mark records that Jesus,

*“. . . appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons.”* (Mark 3:14,15) The first item on the list is to be with Jesus. Preaching and casting out demons are the fruit of a life of intimacy with Jesus. The Ephesian church was noted for its hard work, perseverance, and its unwillingness to endure wicked men. But they abandoned the one thing that really mattered: their first love.

Noah Webster defined “to commune” as “to converse; to talk together familiarly; to impart sentiments mutually, in private or familiar discourse.[[12]](#footnote-12)1

Illustration: Prayer is like the development of a photographic image. As our life is exposed to God, we slowly take on His image.

We cultivate our relationship with Him through regular, consistent time spent in prayer. Prayer is not just asking things from God, but it is also encountering God. When we meet Him, we are changed.

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| 2. Prayer is the pursuit (2) of God. |

### EXPLANATION

*“My soul follows hard after You*.” (Psalm 63:8)

“We pursue God because, and only because, He has first put an urge within us that spurs us to the pursuit. The impulse to pursue God originates with God, but the outworking of that impulse is our following hard after Him.”[[13]](#footnote-13)2

“O God, I have tasted Your goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need of further grace. I am ashamed of my lack of desire. O God, I want to want You; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made more thirsty still. Show me Your glory so I may know You indeed. Begin in mercy a new work of love within me. Say to my soul, ‘Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.’ Then give me grace to rise and follow You up from this misty lowland where I have wandered so long. In Jesus' name, Amen.” **[[14]](#footnote-14)**

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| Prayer is a lifestyle characterized by devotion (3), determination, and discipline.  *And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*  ACTS 2:42 |

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| *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.*  COLOSSIANS 4:12 |

### EXPLANATION

*“Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.”* (Colossians 4:12 NIV)

The English word "wrestling" is translated from the original Greek word *agonizomai*. It means to contend with adversaries, to struggle with difficulties, and to strive with great zeal to obtain something.

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| *All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.*  ACTS 1:14 |

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| **Jesus Lived a Life of Prayer**  1. Jesus prayed in the morning (4).  *And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.*  MARK 1:35 |

### EXPLANATION

Jesus said, *“. . . The Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”* (John 5:19) Jesus was able to see what His Father was doing and hear what His Father was saying in His private prayer time.

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| 2. Jesus prayed alone (5) and with His disciples.  *And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray.*  MARK 6:46 |

### EXPLANATION

Jesus practiced the spiritual discipline of silence and solitude. A balanced life of prayer contains a good mix of private prayer and corporate prayer.

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| *Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.*  LUKE 9:28 |

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| 3. Jesus prayed before important events (6).  *Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.”*  MATTHEW 26:36 |

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| **The Benefits of a Life of Prayer**  1. We learn to depend (7) on God and not on ourselves. |

### EXPLANATION

Self-reliance is at the core of man’s determination to live on his own terms and in rebellion to God. Conversion and submission to Christ’s Lordship lays the axe to the root of that tree, but there is still a significant amount of self-reliance left in us. God works in many ways to break the spirit of self-reliance. Paul said to the Corinthians, “For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.” (2 Corinthians 1:8,9) Jacob was the epitome of the self-reliant man. He was used to getting what he wanted through his own guile and cunning. But one night he wrestled with God and was forever changed. Jacob’s story is an Old Testament picture of the process of brokenness that God puts us through to teach us to depend wholly upon Him. And prayer is one of His primary teaching tools.

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| 2. We are filled (8) with God’s presence.  *When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.*  EXODUS 34:29 |

### EXPLANATION

Moses was so saturated with God’s presence that he needed a veil to cover his face before he could speak with the Israelites. Paul referred to this event when he told the Corinthians, *“But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”* (2 Corinthians 3:18)

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| 3. We get direction (9) from God.  *While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”*  ACTS 13:2 |

### EXPLANATION

The following are other examples of God giving specific direction to people during a time of prayer.

*20While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the Lord my God for the holy hill of my God, 21while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. 22He made me understand, speaking with me . . .*

(Daniel 9:20-22)

*30And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing 31and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. 32Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’"* (Acts 10:30-32)

*17“When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance 18and saw him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’"* (Acts 22:17,18)

Prayer prepares our hearts for the assignments we receive from God.

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| 4. We are strengthened (10) by God against adversity.  *And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.*  1 SAMUEL 30:6 |

### EXPLANATION

In 1 Samuel 27, David and his men attacked the Amalekites and destroyed them, leaving none alive. Then, while David was away in Jezreel, the Amalekites returned the favor. They burned the city and carried off the women and children. David’s men, seeing their homes ruined and their families taken began to talk of stoning him. It would be hard to imagine worse circumstances. And yet David turned to God in prayer, refusing to despair. God strengthened him and directed him how to overtake the Amalekites.

Josiah, the nation’s last righteous king, was dead and Babylon was nearing the gates of Jerusalem. But Habakkuk found God’s strength in prayer during a time of overwhelming adversity. *“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of a deer, He enables me to go on the heights.”* (Habakkuk 3:17-19)

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| 5. We find our breakthrough (11), deliverance, and victory.  *And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.*  JOEL 2:32 |

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| **The Role of Solitude in a Life of Prayer** [[15]](#footnote-15)  1. Solitude is the voluntary withdrawal from normal human interaction and activity for spiritual (12) purposes. Our great role model for solitude is the Lord Jesus Christ. |

### EXPLANATION

The companion discipline to prayer is solitude.

“We live in a noisy, busy world. Silence and solitude are not twentieth-century words. They fit the era of Victorian lace, high-button shoes, and kerosene lamps better than our age of television, video arcades, and joggers wired with earphones. We have become a people with an aversion to quiet and an uneasiness with being alone.” **[[16]](#footnote-16)**

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| *And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone . . .*  MATTHEW 14:23 |

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| 2. Solitude enables us to hear (13) the voice of God better.  *11And he said, “Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. 13And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”*  1 KINGS 19:11-13 |

### EXPLANATION

God sent Elijah to a secluded mountain in order to hear His voice.

“He fills the world with His speaking voice. We trained ourselves throughout our unredeemed days to “suppress the truth.” Now, as believers, we must retrain ourselves to listen to His voice.”**[[17]](#footnote-17)**

In 1865, while Hudson Taylor was back in England to rest and continue some medical studies, he struggled with a decision. He sensed that God might be leading him to do something no one else was doing—taking the gospel to the unreached millions in inland China. But Taylor was fearful of leading such a great enterprise, knowing that the burden of enlisting missionaries, as well as finding and maintaining their financial support, would rest on his shoulders. By Sunday, June 25, he could stand the uncertainty no longer. Worn out and ill, he had gone to rest with friends at Brighton. But instead of enjoying their company he knew he must have silence and solitude, and he wandered out along the sands left by the receding tide. A decision had to be made. He must know God's will. As he walked, the thought came, “If we are obeying the Lord, the responsibility rests with Him, not with us! You, Lord, shall have all the burden! At Your bidding, I go forward, leaving results with You.” “How restfully I turned away from the sands,” he said, recalling the deliverance of that hour. “The conflict ended, all was joy and peace. And how I did sleep that night!” **[[18]](#footnote-18)**

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| 3. Solitude restores (14) us physically and spiritually.  *31And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.*  MARK 6:31,32 |

*. . . but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.* (Isaiah 40:31)

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| 4. Solitude enables (15) us to maintain a spiritual perspective. |

“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 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!” **[[19]](#footnote-19)**

“We need to find God, and He cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. We need silence to be able to touch souls. **[[20]](#footnote-20)**

One of the most famous and life-changing events in the life of Billy Graham happened in August 1949. This was just before the Los Angeles crusade that thrust him into national prominence. Many who were not around at that time may not know that for a short period the unofficial title of North America's most prominent evangelist fell upon a man named Chuck Templeton. But by this time Templeton was coming under the influence of men who doubted the inspiration of Scripture, and this eventually led to his complete denial of the faith. He began to share the books and ideas that were shaping him with Graham. And only days before Graham drove to California, Templeton told him that by continuing to believe the Bible the young evangelist was committing intellectual suicide. While speaking at a youth conference in the San Bernardino Mountains, Graham knew he had to get God's perspective on the matter, and he found it through solitude. Here is how he describes that night: “I went back alone to the cottage and read in my Bible for a while, and then I decided to take a walk in the forest.” There he recalled that phrases such as ‘the Word of the Lord came,’ and ‘thus saith the Lord,’ were used more than two thousand times in Scripture. He meditated on the attitude of Christ, who fulfilled the law and the prophets, who quoted from them constantly and never indicated that they might be wrong. As he walked he said, “Lord, what shall I do? What shall be the direction of my life?” He saw that intellect alone could not resolve the question of the Bible's inspiration and authority. Beyond that it ultimately became an issue of faith. He thought of the faith he had in many every day things that he did not understand, such as airplanes and cars, and asked himself why it was only the things of the Spirit where such faith was considered wrong. “So I went back and got my Bible,” he continues, “and I went out in the moonlight. And I got to a stump and put the Bible on the stump, and I knelt down, and I said, ‘Oh, God; I cannot prove certain things. I cannot answer some of the questions Chuck is raising and some of the other people are raising, but I accept this Book by faith as the Word of God.’” **[[21]](#footnote-21)**

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| application (10 minutes) [The teacher may choose just one question and ask the participants to answer it by discussing within their groups. Class processing will be done after their discussion.]   1. Since self-reliance is at the core of man’s determination to live on his own terms, how has a life of prayer helped to break the power of self-reliance in your life? 2. Many people find it difficult to remain consistent in prayer. What are some of the challenges you have had with remaining consistent and how have you overcome them? 3. Many of us are so busy that we don’t know how to be still and quiet before God anymore. Do you think you’re like this as well? If so, why do you find it difficult to be quiet or alone? How does this affect your devotional life? What can you do to change it? |

### class processing (5 minutes)

### [At this point, the teacher will ask two to three participants to share what they have discussed in the group discussion during the application.]

### activity (10 minutes)

**Praying for Important Church Events**

[Have the admins distribute the Prayer Guide handouts that contain your church's upcoming events for this month. Divide the class into smaller groups and assign a prayer point per group. It might be good to have the worship team's keyboardist or house worship music play in the background.]

# Session 4 – THE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER II

### LOGISTICAL NEEDS

* video course by Bishop Manny Carlos (if there's no live teacher)

### Lecture (25 minutes)

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| *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*  JAMES 5:16 |

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| **The Prayer of Faith**  1. The prayer of faith is a request to God for a specific benefit (1).  *”Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”*  MARK 11:24 |

### EXPLANATION

The prayer of faith is prayed for specific, personal needs for yourself or for others. It includes healing, a new job, selling your home, finding a parking place in the downtown business district, etc.

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| 2. The prayer of faith is based on the promises (2) of God.  *14And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. 15And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*  1 JOHN 5:14,15 |

### EXPLANATION

How do we know His will? Whatever is recorded in Scripture is His will. *For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. . . .* (2 Corinthians 1:20) To have the confidence John is referring to, find Bible verses that address the thing that you want. Meditate on them until you receive the full assurance of faith.

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| 3. The prayer of faith is prayed to the Father in Jesus' (3) name.  *“. . . Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.”*  JOHN 16:23 |

### EXPLANATION

Jesus has given us the power of attorney to use His name. The power of attorney is the legal right to designate someone else to act on your behalf on matters that you specify. The person who executes the power of attorney is called the principal. The person designated to act is called the agent. The principal designates that the agent is authorized to act on the principal’s behalf—to stand in the shoes of the principal—for whatever purpose the principal permits.

The name of Jesus unlocks the blessings of Heaven. *And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.* (Acts 3:16)

*12“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 13Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."* (John 14:12,13)

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| **Keys to an Effective Prayer Life**  1. Pray with persistence (4).  *5And he said to them, “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves, 6for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; 7and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything’? 8I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. 9And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”*  LUKE 11:5-10 |

### EXPLANATION

In Middle Eastern villages, hospitality was a very important part of life. When Jesus described the sleeping neighbor, his listeners must have been horrified, for no member of a village would ever refuse to help a guest. For the man to say “trouble me not” would have been a great violation of the social code and an insult to the whole village. It was unheard of for a person to refuse to help someone in need.

This parable teaches that if a sleeping neighbor, based on social etiquette, will meet the needs of a friend, “how much more” will our heavenly Father who longs to bless us meet our needs?

God should not be compared to the sleeping neighbor.

1. God does not slumber or sleep. He is always alert to our needs.

2. We do not have to pound on the door to wake Him up. He knows our needs before we even ask Him.

3. God is not irritated when we ask for help.

Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness to provide for us. It is an importunity born of faith that makes for an effective prayer life.

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| 2. Pray with boldness (5).  *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*  HEBREWS 4:16 |

### EXPLANATION

It is a sad fact that many of God's own people approach Him as slaves and servants. These people feel so unqualified and unworthy to come because they have no understanding of a wonderful heavenly Father who loves and cares for them and is more anxious to give to His children than they are to receive from Him.

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| 3. Pray without ceasing (6).  *. . . praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.*  EPHESIANS 6:18 |

### EXPLANATION

The diary of George Mueller chronicles his devotion in prayer:

“In November 1844, I began to pray for the conversion of five individuals. I prayed every day without a single intermission, whether sick or in health, on the land, on the sea, and whatever the pressure of my engagements might be. Eighteen months elapsed before the first of the five was converted. I thanked God and prayed on for the others. Five years elapsed, and then the second was converted. I thanked God for the second, and prayed on for the other three. Day by day, I continued to pray for them, and six years passed before the third was converted. I thanked God for the three, and went on praying for the other two. These two remained unconverted. Thirty-six years later he wrote that the other two, sons of one of Mueller's friends, were still not converted. He wrote: But I hope in God, I pray on, and look for the answer. They are not converted yet, but they will be.” In 1897, fifty-two years after he began to pray, these two men were finally converted—after Mueller died.[[22]](#footnote-22)1

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| application (10 minutes) [The teacher may choose just one question and ask the participants to answer it by discussing within their groups. Class processing will be done after their discussion.]   1. Describe a time when you prayed the “prayer of faith,” and saw it answered. How did this affect your relationship with God? How did it affect your prayer life? 2. Practically, what does it mean to ***pray without ceasing***? How do you do this realistically while going about your daily life? 3. How do you balance praying with certainty and not blaming yourself or God if your prayers are not answered? |

### ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)

**Think-Pair-Share: Praying the Scripture**

With a partner, ask the students to answer the following:

What is one thing you're believing God for in this season? What is one Scripture promise that you can claim as you agree in prayer? Pray this Scripture.

[The teacher may give samples of prayers such as, healing, provision, wisdom, salvation of family, etc.]

### BREAK (10 MINUTES)

# Session 5 – THE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER III

### LOGISTICAL NEEDS

* video course by Bishop Manny Carlos (if there's no live teacher)

### LECTURE (25 MINUTES)

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| **Principles of Effective Intercession**  *And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none.*  EZEKIEL 22:30 |

### EXPLANATION

The prayer of intercession is praying for others and their needs. To intercede means, “To mediate or bridge the gap between two parties.” It also means, “To plead on another's behalf.”

The principles for effective intercession all come from phrases in this text.

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| 1. Intercession begins (1) with God. (*And I sought . . .* ) |

### EXPLANATION

God is actively seeking individuals that He might intercede through. *“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.”* (2 Chronicles 16:9)

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| God initiates intercession because He cares (2) deeply about His creation.  (Hosea 11:3-9) |

### EXPLANATION

*3Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. 4I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them. 5They shall not return to the land of Egypt, but Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. 6The sword shall rage against their cities, consume the bars of their gates, and devour them because of their own counsels. 7My people are bent on turning away from me,*

*and though they call out to the Most High, he shall not raise them up at all. 8How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. 9I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim . . .* (Hosea 11:3-9)

Although God’s people (symbolized here by the tribe of Ephraim) were determined to turn from Him (11:7), His compassion was turned toward them. This passage vividly displays the compassion of God for the people He has created.

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| 2. Intercession requires a human representative (3). (*. . . for a man . . .*) |

### EXPLANATION

Even though God initiates intercession, we cannot sit on the couch watching television and claim, “I’m waiting for God to initiate intercession in me.” God requires that we actively respond to His overtures to intercede.

The word "man" in the text and in these notes is generic. Some of the most effective intercessors are women.

John Wesley: “It seems that God does not do anything unless someone asks Him.”

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| 3. Intercession requires empathy (4). (*. . . among them . . .*)  *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*  MATTHEW 9:36 |

### EXPLANATION

God did not seek for a man who was distant from the people He wanted to reach. He sought for someone “among them,” someone who knew them and understood their situation.

Jesus urged His disciples to intercede for the lost because He felt compassion for the multitudes. Jesus felt compassion for the multitudes because He saw them, He was out among them.

Intercession is motivated and maintained by a lifestyle of Great Commission activity.

A burden for intercession does not come in the prayer closet. It comes from an active involvement in the Great Commission. Prayer is not a substitute for Great Commission activity. Nearly all of the notable intercessors in history were also known for their Great Commission activity. Three Old Testament examples are Moses, Daniel, and Nehemiah, men known for their intercession and their activity in advancing God’s kingdom. There are many examples in the New Testament as well. Epaphras was a great intercessor (Colossians 4:12) and a church planter (he started the church in Colossae and probably the church in Laodicea and Hierapolis). James, the Lord’s half brother and the leader of the church in Jerusalem, was known in his old age as “Camel knees” because he spent so much time in prayer. Paul, the greatest apostle in history, also travailed for the Galatians until Christ was formed in them. In church history, the names of Praying Hyde, David Brainerd, and George Mueller stand out among the countless number who have interceded for the lost and given themselves to the Great Commission.

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| 4. Intercession requires persistent, unwavering faith (5). (*. . . stand in the breach . . .*)  There is a spiritual battle in intercession. |

### EXPLANATION

In ancient warfare, the attacking army always sought to find a weakness in their opponent’s wall. When they discovered the weakness, they would attack it with the full force of their army in an attempt to breach the wall. When the wall was breached, the bravest warriors from the city stood in the breach and ‘became’ the wall in an attempt to save the city.

[ILLUSTRATION: There is a scene in the movie, The Two Towers, where the men of Rohan stand in the breech after the orcs had battered down the wall at the Battle of Helm’s Deep.]

Intercession engages the enemy in a very real and tangible way. This is why the intercessor must be strong in faith.

The Chinese general Sun Tzu wrote the earliest military treatise*, The Art of War*, around 500 BC. Many of Sun Tzu’s principles are relevant to our struggle in intercession.

“Skillful warriors first make themselves invincible, and then watch for vulnerability in their opponents.” How do we make ourselves invincible? By putting on the whole armor of God. “Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.” (Ephesians 6:13)

“Good warriors take their stand on ground where they cannot lose.” Good intercessors take their stand on the Word of God, knowing that they cannot lose from that position of strength.

“A victorious army first wins the battle and then seeks the battle; a defeated army first battles and then seeks victory.” *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.* (1 John 5:4)

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| 5. Intercession requires an intimate relationship (6) with God. (*. . . before me . . .*) |

### EXPLANATION

The phrase “before me” literally means, “in my face.” It is a figure of speech that means in the very presence of God.

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| **The Holy Spirit and Intercession**  The Holy Spirit helps us to intercede (7).  *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought . . .*  ROMANS 8:26 |

### EXPLANATION

The English word "helps" is translated from the complex Greek word *sunantilambanomai* which means, “to take hold together against.” The Holy Spirit helps us intercede by taking hold with us against our weaknesses. The Holy Spirit does not intercede for us, but He helps us to intercede.

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| 1. . . . through travail  *. . . but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*  ROMANS 8:26 |

### EXPLANATION

The word travail is used literally in Scripture to refer to the pains of childbirth, and figuratively to refer to the intercessory burden of the Holy Spirit.

. . . *my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!* (Galatians 4:19)

“On one occasion when I got to town to start a revival, a lady contacted me who ran a boarding house. She said, ‘Brother Finney, do you know a Father Nash? He and two other men have been at my boarding house for the last three days, but they haven't eaten a bite of food. I opened the door and peeped in at them because I could hear them groaning, and I saw them down on their faces. They have been this way for three days, lying prostrate on the floor and groaning. I thought something awful must have happened to them. I was afraid to go in and I did not know what to do. Would you please come see about them?’ ‘No, it is not necessary,’ Finney replied. ‘They just have a spirit of travail in prayer.’”[[23]](#footnote-23)1

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| 2. . . . through speaking in tongues  *And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*  ROMANS 8:27 |

### EXPLANATION

Speaking in tongues allows us to pray the will of God. (Romans 8:27)

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| APPLICATION (10 minutes) [The teacher may choose just one question and ask the participants to answer it by discussing within their groups. Class processing will be done after their discussion.]   1. What is the main obstacle you face in practicing intercession? What are the most effective ways you have discovered to battle that obstacle? 2. Why is a lifestyle of Great Commission activity necessary for effective intercession? How are you actively involved in the Great Commission, and what effect is it having on your prayer life? 3. In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus contrasted God with the unjust judge. What lessons concerning intercession can you find in this passage?   *1And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. 2He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. 3And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ 4For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God*  *nor respect man, 5yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’” 6And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. 7And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? 8I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the*  *Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”*  LUKE 18:1-8 |

### class processing (5 minutes)

### [At this point, the teacher will ask two to three participants to share what they have discussed in the group discussion during the application.]

### BREAK (10 MINUTES)

# Session 6 – THE DISCIPLINE OF FASTING

### LOGISTICAL NEEDS

* video course by Bishop Manny Carlos

### lecture (25 minutes)

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| 1. Fasting is abstaining from food as a spiritual discipline for spiritual progress (1). It was a normal practice in both the Old and New Testaments. |

### EXPLANATION

Fasting is denying the outer man its necessities so that our inner man can be more in tune with the Spirit of God.

Moses fasted for forty days. Daniel fasted for twenty-one days. Nehemiah, Ezra, Jeremiah, Daniel, Esther, and David were all known for their fasting.

Jesus fasted for forty days. Paul told the Corinthians, *“I have fasted often.”*

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| 2. Although Jesus did not require His disciples to fast, He spoke of a day coming when they should fast.  *And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.”*  MATTHEW 9:15  **Why Should We Fast?**  *6“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? 7Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? 8Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.”*  ISAIAH 58:6-8 |

### EXPLANATION

The following excerpt from the Expositor’s Bible Commentary provides the background for this text. “The prophet has already exposed the empty ritualism of the people in chapter 1. Here he concentrates on one religious activity—fasting. Through his prophet, God exposes the people's hypocrisy (verses 3­-6). Clearly, their fasting was not spiritually motivated. Apparently they made the fast easier by idleness and made up for lost time by getting their laborers to work all the harder. Fasting undertaken as a duty can produce an edgy, irritable community, especially in difficult climatic conditions; and v.4a probably reflects this. Prayers offered with this kind of background would never reach the heavens (v.46). The humbling v.5 refers to (cf. also v.3) seems to be a synonym for fasting. Sackcloth and ashes also suggest the extravagant expression of humiliation.”

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| 1. We should fast for victory (2) over spiritual forces. (Isaiah 58:6) |

### EXPLANATION

*“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?* (Isaiah 58:6)

During the reign of Cyrus, Daniel fasted for three weeks. *“In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia . . . I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips . . .”* (Daniel 10:1-3)

At the end of his fast, an angel appeared to him. *“Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.”* (Daniel 10:14)

The angel had been dispatched twenty-one days earlier but had been detained by the “prince of Persia.”

*12Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. 13The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia . . ."* (Daniel 10:12,13)

“We are not to understand this “prince” as Cyrus or any other earthly ruler. The conflict here is a spiritual one. The “prince of the kingdom of Persia” refers to a malignant spirit whose assigned purpose was to frustrate the purposes of God in the lives of the rulers. However, the angelic messenger was assisted in this struggle by Michael, a prince among the angels of God.”[[24]](#footnote-24)1

Daniel’s fasting and intercession enabled the angel to defeat the spiritual forces in the heavenly realm and break through with the message he was sent with.

An incident in the ministry of Jesus confirms the role of fasting for spiritual warfare.

*25And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” 26And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.” 27But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. 28And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” 29And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”* (Mark 9:25-29)

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| 2. We should fast for health and healing (3). (Isaiah 58:8) |

### EXPLANATION

*Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily . . .* (Isaiah 58:8)

The health benefits of fasting have been documented by many medical studies. During a fast, energy is diverted away from the digestive system due to its lack of use and towards the metabolism and immune system.

Some of the benefits of fasting are autolysis, detoxification, and an extended life.

Due to the lack of incoming energy, the body turns to its own resources during a fast. This is called autolysis, the breaking down of fat stores in the body in order to produce energy. The less one eats, the more the body turns to these stored fats. When the fat reserves are used for energy during a fast, chemicals are released from the fatty acids into the system and are then eliminated through the colon, liver, kidneys, and other organs. A slower metabolic rate, more efficient protein production, an improved immune system, and the increased production of hormones extend life.[[25]](#footnote-25)2

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| 3. We should fast for answered (4) prayers. (Isaiah 58:9) |

### EXPLANATION

*"Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’ . . ."*

(Isaiah 58:9)

Ezra petitioned the Lord with fasting for safe travel from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Ezra had to transport 650 talents of silver, silver articles weighing 100 talents, 100 talents of gold, and 20 bowls of gold valued at 1,000 darics through a land infested with bandits without any military aid. So he sought the Lord with fasting and prayer.

*23So we fasted and implored our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty. . . . 31Then we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem. The hand of our God was on us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambushes by the way.* (Ezra 8:23,31)

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| 4. We should fast for guidance (5). (Isaiah 58:11) |

### EXPLANATION

*"And the Lord will guide you continually.” (*Isaiah 58:11)

When the leaders at Antioch fasted, the Holy Spirit guided them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for apostolic ministry.

*1Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers . . . 2While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”* (Acts 13:1,2)

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| 5. We should fast for anointing (6) in ministry. (Isaiah 58:8) |

### EXPLANATION

*"Then shall your light break forth like the dawn . . ."* (Isaiah 58:8)

After fasting forty days, Jesus went forth in the power of the Spirit.

*“Jesus . . . was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days He was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days . . . Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through the whole countryside.”* (Luke 4:1,2,14)

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| **How Should We Fast?**  1. A fast may be total (7) or partial. |

### EXPLANATION

An absolute fast is one without food or water. Absolute fasts are rare. Esther and the Jews went three days and nights without food or water—but that was in the face of impending national disaster. Moses went forty days without food or water in the presence of the Lord—but that was a supernatural fast. The general rule of thumb is: avoid absolute fasts.

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| • A total fast is one without any food. |

However, you should drink plenty of water.

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| • A partial fast is one without certain kinds of food. (Daniel 10:3)  2. A fast can be either corporate or personal (8). |

### EXPLANATION

Jehoshaphat called a corporate fast when Judah was threatened by the Moabites and Ammonites (2 Chronicles 20:3). David fasted when his child became ill (2 Samuel 12:16).

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| 3. A fast may vary in length (9). |

### EXPLANATION

A fast may be one night (Daniel 6:18), one day (1 Samuel 7:6), three days and nights (Acts 9:9), seven days (1 Samuel 31:13), twenty-one days (Daniel 10:3-13), forty days (1 Kings 19:8), or any appropriate length you choose.

“Bible personalities fasted until they obtained from God what they desired (see the examples of Hannah, 1 Samuel 1:6-8,17,18; and Paul, Acts 9:9,17-19) or until the Lord made it evident that what they requested simply would not be obtained (as in the case of David, 2 Samuel 12:15-23).”[[26]](#footnote-26)3

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| 4. A fast should be combined with extra prayer (10). (Daniel 9:3) |

*Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.* (Daniel 9:3)

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| 5. A fast should not be advertised (11). (Matthew 6:16-18) |

### EXPLANATION

*16“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 17But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."* (Matthew 6:16-18)

A fast is not for self-punishment. A fast may accompany a time of repentance,**[[27]](#footnote-27)4** but it is never undertaken to punish ourselves for sin.

“First, let fasting be done unto the Lord with our eye singly fixed on Him. Let our intention herein be this, and this alone, to glorify our Father which is in heaven.”**[[28]](#footnote-28)5**

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| APPLICATION (10 minutes) [The teacher may choose just one question and ask the participants to answer it by discussing within their groups. Class processing will be done after their discussion.]   1. Over the past year, describe your practice of the discipline of fasting. Why did you fast and what were the results? 2. What makes fasting difficult? What makes it meaningful? 3. What would motivate you to fast more regularly? |

### class processing (5 minutes)

### [At this point, the teacher will ask two to three participants to share what they have discussed in the group discussion during the application.]

### end of this course

### [At this point, you may give last-minute instructions, allow time for filling out feedback forms, and remind the class of the *Spiritual Disciplines* quiz to be done next class.]

1. Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, p. 156 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Willard, p. 138 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. James Orr, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Trent C. Butler, Holman Bible Dictionary [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. M.G. Easton, Easton’s Bible Dictionary [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Robert Longman Jr., http://www.spirithome.com/spirdisc.html [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Gordon Fee, Paul, the Spirit and the People of God*,* p. 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Robert Longman Jr., http://www.spirithome.com/spirdisc.html [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. John Wesley, Preface to Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Modified from, Scripture Memory, Your Key to Success, Monica Best, http://www.fsbcdc.org [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 1 Noah Webster, The American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 2 A.W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God, p. 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. This is an edited version of Tozer’s prayer at the end of chapter one of *The Pursuit of God*. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Some material excerpted from Donald S. Whitney, [Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life](http://www.spiritualdisciplines.org/books.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Jean Fleming, Living the Christ-centered Life Between Walden and the Whirlwind [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Tozer p. 83 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Donald S. Whitney, [Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life](http://www.spiritualdisciplines.org/books.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. C. H. Spurgeon, Solitude, Silence, Submission, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, vol. 42, p. 266 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Mother Teresa, Willing Slaves to the Will of God [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. 10 John Pollack, Billy Graham: The Authorized Biography, pp 80, 81 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. 1 Ben Patterson, Deepening Your Conversation with God, pp. 105, 106 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. 1 www.wayoflife.org/fbns/daniel-nash/daniel-nash-princeofprayer.html [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. 1 W.A. Criswell Ed., The Believer’s Study Bible [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. 2 Adapted from, The Health Benefits of Fasting, Will Carroll, http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/ [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. 3 Diane S. Dew, http://dianedew.com/fasting.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. 4 I Samuel 7:6, Joel 1:14, Jonah 3:5-10 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. 5 John Wesley, Sermons On Several Occasions, p.301 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)