

College Park Church Institute

The Disciplines Class Syllabus

March 23, 2025 – May 18, 2025 (skipping April 20)

Time: 10:45 AM

Location: The Basement

Updated March 18, 2025

What if we didn't just obey the teachings of Jesus but lived the lifestyle of Jesus?

Objective

This 8-week course explores the spiritual disciplines of the Christian life, guiding participants in developing habits and practices to deepen their relationship with God and become formed into the lifestyle of Jesus.

Participants will engage in recommended readings, listen to in-class presentations, participate in interactive discussions, and do weekly exercises and reflections to help them understand and integrate these spiritual practices into their lives. Their experience will culminate in a personal retreat and the creation of a personal "rule of life."

Class Format (90 Minutes):

- **10 minutes:** Discussion of prior week's assignment & pre-presentation discussion questions (at tables or large group)
- **35 minutes:** Teaching/presentation (interactive)
- **25 minutes:** Discussion at Tables
- **20 minutes:** Open Q&A
- **Post-class:** Individual Q&A with class leaders

Course Components

1. **RECOMMENDED PRE-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:**

Read, watch, listen to material in preparation for that week's class topic. You are not required to complete all pre-class assignments. These are just for your benefit to understand and engage better in discussions.

2. **CLASS:**

Share, discuss, listen to presentation, and engage in question-and-answer about particular spiritual disciplines over 90 minute class time.

3. **POST-CLASS EXERCISE + REFLECTION:**

Try one spiritual practice that week and reflect on it by writing a very short summary of your experience and/or takeaways.

4. **RETREAT:**

All students are encouraged to take a personal solitude retreat during or after the course (2-hour minimum). This retreat should include silence, prayer, and reflection. It can also include fasting, Scripture, reading, and/or journaling if desired. We will provide a recommended guide to help with this time.

5. **PERSONAL RULE OF LIFE:**

All students will complete the class having written out a working draft of their personal "rule of life" (their rhythms of spiritual disciplines). The class will spend time on this particularly during the final session.

Primary Books

Students can select which book they desire to use as their primary reading for the class. If you are uncertain, we recommend the first title. (This reading is not required, but recommended.)

- *[Celebration of Discipline](#)* by **Richard Foster** (256 pages)

This classic book on the spiritual disciplines in our time (originally published in 1978) is beautifully written. It covers the disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship, guidance, and celebration.

(Note: Foster is a Quaker and is more open to some mystical practices than some Christians from a more Reformed tradition. Nevertheless, this book has inspired and informed my journey into these practices, as it has many across numerous denominations since its publication.)

- *[The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry](#)* by **John Mark Comer** (301 pages)

This is an accessibly written invitation for us to make space for God in our hurried lives and culture. It covers having a rule of life, silence and solitude, sabbath, simplicity, and slowing. It is an excellent resource to start in this journey—by making space instead of just adding more into our already busy lives.

(Note: Comer does quote widely from outside traditions such as Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and non-Christian psychology. I have been very helped by this book personally, even though there are some areas where I may disagree with him in a few other areas of theology.)

- *[Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life](#)* by **Donald Whitney** (341 pages)

This is a lengthy treatment of the spiritual disciplines, emphasizing the importance of God's Word. Disciplines included are Bible intake (2 chapters), prayer, worship, evangelism, serving, stewardship, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling, and learning.

(Note: Although very understandable and practical, Whitney is a Southern Baptist professor who may be lengthy at points.)

How to Read Each Book “Week by Week” in this Class:

The following is a summary showing which chapter you are asked to read for each upcoming week’s class.

As a reminder: you are only asked to choose 1 book for the entirety of the class. This is recommended, not required.

Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster

Intro: The Good Life	for WEEK 1
Ch.1: The Spiritual Disciplines – p.10-18	for WEEK 1

PART I: THE INWARD DISCIPLINES

Ch.2: Meditation – p.19-23	for WEEK 6
Ch.3: Prayer – p.24-27	for WEEK 4
Ch.4: Fasting – p.28-31	for WEEK 4
Ch.5: Study – p.32-38	for WEEK 6

PART II. THE OUTWARD DISCIPLINES

Ch.6: Simplicity – p.39-43	
Ch.7: Solitude – p.44	for WEEK 2
Ch.8: Submission – p.48-51	
Ch.9: Service – p.52-58	for WEEK 5

PART III. THE CORPORATE DISCIPLINES

Ch.10: Confession – p.59-62	for WEEK 5
Ch.11: Worship – p.63-67	for WEEK 3
Ch.12: Guidance – p.68-71	
Ch.13: Celebration – p.72-78	

***The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer**

Foreword (John Ortberg)

Prologue: Autobiography of an epidemic

PART I: THE PROBLEM

Ch.1 Hurry: the great enemy of spiritual life

Ch.2 A brief history of speed

Ch.3 Something is deeply wrong

PART II: THE SOLUTION

Ch.4 Hint: the solution isn't more time

Ch.5 The secret of the easy yoke

Ch.6 What we're really talking about is a rule of life for WEEK 1

Ch.7 INTERMISSION: Wait, what are the spiritual disciplines again? for WEEK 1

PART III: Four practices for unhurrying your life

Ch.8 Silence and Solitude for WEEK 2

Ch.9 Sabbath for WEEK 3

Ch.10 Simplicity for WEEK 3

Ch.11 Slowing for WEEK 3

Epilogue: A quiet life

***Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald Whitney**

Ch.1: The Spiritual Disciplines – p.1-20 for WEEK 1

Ch.2: Bible Intake (part 1) - p.21-36 for WEEK 6

Ch.3: Bible Intake (part 2) – p.37-78 (long!) for WEEK 6

Ch.4: Prayer – p.78-100 for WEEK 4

Ch.5: Worship – p.101-118 for WEEK 3

Ch.6: Evangelism – p.119-140 for WEEK 7

Ch.7: Serving – p.141-158 for WEEK 5

Ch.8: Stewardship – p.159-190 (long!) for WEEK 7

Ch.9: Fasting – p.191-220 for WEEK 4

Ch.10: Silence & Solitude – p.221-248 (longish) for WEEK 2

Ch.11: Journaling – p.249-270

Ch.12: Learning – p.271-286

Ch.13: Perseverance in the Disciplines – p.287-304 for WEEK 8

Course Schedule

SESSION, DATE, PRESENTER	TOPIC	RECOMMENDED PRE-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS	POST-CLASS EXERCISE
WEEK 1 March 23, 2025 Bob Martin IV	Overview of Formation & Spiritual Disciplines	RECOMMENDED: Foster - Intro & Ch.1 (The Spir Disciplines) -OR- Whitney – Ch.1 (The Spir Disciplines) -OR- Comer <i>ROH</i> – Ch.6 (What we’re...), Ch.7 (INTERMISSION) ADDITIONAL: The Practicing the Way Course Session 02: Formation Part 01 (23:44) The Practicing the Way Course Session 03: Formation Part 02 (26:15)	Read Mark 1-3. Highlight/mark when Jesus enacts a spiritual discipline (prayer, solitude, fasting, community, Sabbath, worship, service, evangelism). Write down a very short reflection on this experience (What did you observe? Were you surprised by anything? How did you feel about this?).
WEEK 2 March 30, 2025 Bob Martin IV	Solitude	RECOMMENDED: Foster – Ch.7 (Solitude) -OR- Whitney – Ch.10 (Silence & Solitude) -OR- Comer <i>ROH</i> – Ch. 8 (Silence and solitude) ADDITIONAL: Article: “ Moving From Solitude to Community to Ministry ” by Henri Nouwen (<i>Leadership</i> , Spring 1995)	Spend 5-15 minutes in silence at least 2 days this week. Write a very short reflection on your practice of solitude (Challenges? Benefits?).

		The Silence We Desperately Need Today by Ryan Hawkins (Desiring God)	
WEEK 3 April 6, 2025 Cody Stipes	Sabbath & Worship	RECOMMENDED: Foster – Ch.11 (Worship) OR Whitney – Ch.5 (Worship) OR Comer <i>ROH</i> – Ch.9 (Sabbath), Ch.10 (Simplicity), Ch.11 (Slowing) ADDITIONAL: 5. Sabbath – Fight Hustle, End Hurry podcast (27:31) What does it mean practically to keep the Sabbath holy? – John Piper (8:07) <i>Is the sabbath required?</i> 77. What Is The Sabbath? – Faith Seeking Understanding Podcast – Guy Prentiss Waters (26:45 min) (Answer: Yes) “Is the Sabbath Still Required for Christians?” – (TGC) Trevin Wax, Thomas Schreiner (Answer: No)	Start writing a “Do, Don’t Do” List of what you would do and not do on a sabbath. Include your spouse if applicable. Write a very short reflection on this experience (Challenges? Feelings? Insights?).

WEEK 4 April 13, 2025 Bob Martin IV	Prayer & Fasting	RECOMMENDED: Foster – Ch.3 (Prayer), Ch.4 (Fasting) -OR- Whitney – Ch.4 (Prayer), Ch.9 (Fasting) ADDITIONAL: Don Whitney: How do you pray the Bible? - Midwestern Seminary (2:27) Fasting 01: To Offer Ourselves to God – Rule of Life Podcast (1:37:00)	Practice a 24-hour fast this week (e.g., skip breakfast and lunch). Write a very short reflection on your experience (Challenges? Insights? Feelings? Did you do anything that accompanied this time: like praying?).
WEEK 5 April 27, 2025 Chris Sarver	Community & Service	RECOMMENDED: Foster – Ch.9 (Service), Ch. 10 (Confession) -OR- Whitney – Ch.7 (Serving) ADDITIONAL: Video: The Practicing the Way Course Session 08: Life Together (27:27) (on Community) Staying Honest, Showing Honor - You're Not Crazy podcast – Ray Ortland, Sam Allberry (27:35) (on Confession)	Confess your sins to a trusted Christian friend in your community this week (if married, not your spouse). This doesn't have to be a long conversation. Allow them to respond, and remember/discuss God's restoration. Pray for each other. Write a very short reflection about this experience (Feelings? What were your expectations? Did it meet them? What are your desires for future connection?).
WEEK 6 May 4, 2025 Dr. Bob Martin III	Scripture	RECOMMENDED: Foster – Ch.2 (Meditation), Ch.5 (Study) -OR- Whitney – Ch.2-3 (Bible Intake pt.1-2)	Pick 1 verse or short passage to meditate upon this week. Re-read it each day, pray it, and perhaps memorize it.

		ADDITIONAL: <i>A Gospel Primer for Christians</i> by Milton Vincent (on “preaching the gospel to yourself daily”) Bible Study the Complete Guide in 9 Steps – Dr. Bob Martin III What is BibleProject? (2:31)	Write a very short reflection on what you took away from your passage this week and how God met you through it.
WEEK 7 May 11, 2025 Ryan Skinner	Generosity & Witness	RECOMMENDED: Whitney – Ch.6 (Evangelism), Ch.8 (Stewardship – long!) ADDITIONAL: Video: The Generosity Practice Session 01: There is More Joy in Giving Than Receiving (32:13) Sam Chan - Everyday Evangelism - How to Start – Sam Chan (7:42)	Write down (or voice record) how you would share the gospel with 1 specific friend. Pray for this friend every day this week. Write a very short reflection on this experience (Challenges? Benefits? How are you feeling?).
WEEK 8 May 18, 2025 Bob Martin IV	Creating My "Rule of Life"	RECOMMENDED: Whitney – Ch.13 (Perseverance) ADDITIONAL: Video: The Practicing the Way Course Session 07: Crafting a Rule of Life (25:59) Tool: Practicing The Way Rule of Life Builder	Write down your desired "rule of life" and share it with one person. Write a very short reflection on how this class has influenced your spiritual growth and how you’ll engage in spiritual disciplines in your rule of life. Complete your Solitude Retreat (min 2 hrs). Share your experience with one person.

Additional Resources/Supplemental Reading

These resources have been recommended by various College Park Church elders, pastors and staff in regard to understanding the spiritual disciplines. While these authors may not be in full theological agreement with every aspect of our particular church's theology or practice, nonetheless they have beneficial insights for understanding and applying these disciplines into our spiritual lives. As always, use your discernment and ask questions as appropriate as you engage with these resources.

(Arranged in alphabetical order by author last name.)

1. Spiritual Disciplines (general)

[*The Practicing the Way course and practices videos*](#) by Practicing the Way, John Mark Comer

A fresh set of resources that explain the value of a rule of life and deep dive into 9 spiritual disciplines (4 video sessions each).

(Note: Comer does quote widely from outside traditions such as Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and non-Christian psychology. He has a more mystical and/or charismatic approach to some of the disciplines (such as listening prayer). I have been very helped by these resources personally, even though there are some areas where I may disagree with him in a few other areas of theology.)

[*Disciplines of a Godly Man*](#) by R. Kent Hughes

Encouraging men to engage in the spiritual disciplines as a means of spiritual training for godliness and build healthy discipline for God's glory.

[*Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*](#) by Howard Taylor & Geraldine Taylor

A spiritual biography of the "father of modern missions." What empowered Hudson Taylor's ministry in China? Read through a life characterized God's power and joy to help fuel your own formation and service.

[*The Spirit of the Disciplines*](#) by Dallas Willard

Willard's classic treatment for the purpose and power of the disciplines in our lives as the way God works to form us.

2. Solitude

Article: "[*Take a Break from the Chaos*](#)" by David Mathis (Desiring God)

Mathis commends solitude and silence as an antidote to noisy modern life, but also critiques silence and solitude as not being means of grace by themselves (but they

serve the Word and prayer). For those curious about a Reformed interaction and critique of silence and solitude.

The Way of the Heart by Henri Nouwen

Although Nouwen is a mystic Catholic author, his stories from the desert fathers and pastoral wisdom can be a balm for weary souls and a helpful guide for how to enter into solitude.

3. Sabbath

Reset: Living a Grace-Paced Life in a Burnout Culture by David Murray

How to adjust your life to overcome burnout. The edition for women is entitled [Reset](#) and is co-authored with Shona Murray.

The Emotionally Healthy Leader by Peter Scazzero

Filled with wisdom and helpful practices about how inner spiritual formation and healthy habits of rest and relating lead to more effective leadership and/or ministry.

4. Worship (private & corporate)

Worship: The Reason We Were Created-Collected Insights from A. W. Tozer by A.W. Tozer

Selections from Tozer's published and unpublished works that focus on God as the object of worship, our emotional expression during prayer and praise, and our role as worshipping creatures.

The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness by Tim Keller

A short book on how Christ frees us from self-focus (based on Keller's sermon from 1 Cor. 3:21-4:7).

Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters by Tim Keller

Keller's significant contribution to showing our heart idols (especially money, sex, and power) and how to overcome them.

5. Prayer

Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home by Richard Foster

A sensitive primer on prayer, covering various historic prayer methods and different prayer types such as contemplation, healing, blessing, forgiveness, and rest.

[*A Praying Life*](#) by Paul E. Miller

Overcoming prayerlessness by seeing and practicing prayer as a relationship—including helpful habits and patterns for your prayer life.

[*The Valley of Vision*](#) edited by Arthur Bennett

A collection of Puritan prayers very useful during personal prayer times.

[*Pray the Word: 90 Prayers that Touch the Heart of God*](#) by Tiece King

Daily prayers based on biblical texts. Can be easily used in personal prayer.

[*Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools*](#) by Tyler Staton

Personal stories and direction from a pastor on how to grow a hopeful a prayer life.

[*Transforming Prayer: How Everything Changes When You Seek God's Face*](#) by Daniel Henderson

Utilizing worship-based prayer to see your prayer life transform from being discouraged to a genuine encounter with God.

[*Fervent: A Woman's Battle Plan for Serious, Specific, and Strategic Prayer*](#) by Pricilla Shirer

How to defeat temptations and weather fears to create a battle plan for serious, strategic prayer.

6. Fasting

[*A Hunger for God*](#) by John Piper

A biblical explanation for fasting and its importance in the Christian life.

7. Community

[*Side By Side: Walking with Others in Wisdom and Love*](#) by Edward T. Welch

How we help one another as needy people.

[*Made for Friendship*](#) by Drew Hunter

Local pastor Drew Hunter of Zionsville Fellowship invites readers to consider the value of friendship and how we can pursue critical friendship in our spiritual journey and life.

[*The Compelling Community: Where God's Power Makes a Church Attractive*](#) by Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop

Pastors Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop point out that deep fellowship among Christians is made up of commitment (depth) and diversity (breadth). Especially helpful for pastors and key leaders guiding a church toward deeper community.

8. Serving

[*Love Your Church: 8 Great Things About Being a Church Member*](#) by Tony Merida

A short, accessible book to see the beauty of church membership, including serving, unity, and mission.

[*Don't Waste Your Life*](#) by John Piper

A passionate call to live for God's glory and not waste life on comfort and trivial pursuits.

9. Scripture (reading, study, meditation, memorization)

[*BibleProject*](#) by Tim Mackie and Jon Collins

An independent animation studio producing high-quality animated videos that explain the Bible as one overarching story that points to Jesus.

[*God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*](#) by Vaughn Roberts

A great introduction to Biblical theology—walking through the stages of the entire Bible as one larger story.

10. Generosity

[*Freedom of Simplicity*](#) by Richard Foster

Working out simplicity not as a decluttering for less stress or more leisure, but as a critical spiritual discipline for our soul's health. Includes how simplicity was practiced in the Bible and through Christian history.

[*Plastic Donuts: Giving That Delights the Heart of the Father*](#) by Jeff Anderson

Based on an incident with his daughter when she was a toddler, in this short book, Anderson removes awkwardness and uncertainty that often accompany discussions about giving.

[*The Money Challenge: 30 Days of Discovering God's Design for You and Your Money*](#)
by Art Rainer

A biblically based 30-day journey toward financial health and godly generosity.

[*Money, Possessions & Eternity*](#) by Randy Alcorn

A comprehensive but accessibly written book on what the Bible says about money, including “Why is money so important to God?” and “What should be do about debt?” among other questions.

11. Evangelism/Witness

[*Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus*](#) by J. Mack Stiles

A short treatment of how we can be witnesses as fellow church members.

[*How to Talk about Jesus \(Without Being THAT Guy\): Personal Evangelism in a Skeptical World*](#) by Sam Chan

Australian physician and evangelist Sam Chan breaks down how to practically have conversations with skeptical friends, give them space to share, and be able to offer Jesus.