

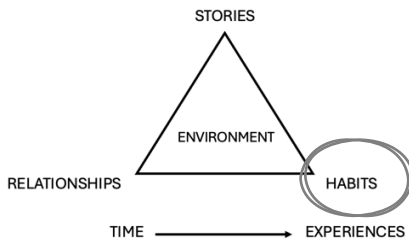
# PRACTICES TO FUEL PRAYER

Bob Martin and Kimberly Miller

**THINK** 25  
PRAYER MATTERS

## FORMATION & RULE OF LIFE

- We are all being shaped—by our environment, relationships, habits, and the stories we believe. **But who are we becoming? (Romans 12:2)**



- **Unintentional Spiritual Formation** happens when we don't deliberately shape our lives around Christ. What if we intentionally arranged—or rearranged—our lives, **our habits** to have the abundant life Jesus calls us to (John 10:10)?
- What is a **rule of life**?
  - It is a routine of habits. These habits can help us carve out time **to be** with Jesus, **to become** more like Him, and **to do** what He did.
  - It's a "rule of life," not "rules for life." The word "rule" comes from the Latin word for a **trellis in a vineyard**. It is a way to organize our lives around "abiding in the vine" just as Jesus envisioned (John 15).

### Benefits of a Rule of Life:

- ✓ Intentionality & Spiritual Growth
- ✓ Balance & Accountability
- ✓ Resilience & Clarity
- ✓ Transformation

**Key Question:** *What habits are shaping your life right now? Are they leading you toward or away from becoming like Jesus?*

## SOLITUDE & SILENCE

**Distraction is one of the greatest threats to faith.** Our world is full of noise—when was the last time you sat in silence without filling the space with music, social media, or texts?

- Luke 5:15-16 – Jesus “often withdrew to **lonely places** and prayed.”
  - The Greek word **eremos** (solitary place) is where Jesus retreated from the demands of ministry. **If Jesus needed solitude, how much more do we?**
- Jesus’ provided a pattern for his disciples and for us to follow. We can follow His example by practicing solitude, creating space to connect with God and nurture our spiritual growth. **Am I busier than Jesus?**

### What Solitude is NOT:

- **Not loneliness** – “Loneliness is inner emptiness. Solitude is inner fulfillment” (Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*).
- **Not just aloneness**
- **Not isolation** – **Isolation** is a movement away from relationships; **Solitude** is a movement toward a relationship with God.

“Solitude, at its most basic and profound level, is simply an opportunity to be ourselves with God.”  
(Ruth Haley Barton, *Invitation to Silence and Solitude*)

### Solitude has a companion: Silence.

- **Exterior Silence:** you silence noise on the outside
- **Interior Silence:** you quiet all the thoughts, worries, emotions on the inside
- The longer we stay in Solitude and Silence we come to stillness.

“It’s coming to a place where the troubled waters of your heart settle down like a glassy lake early in the morning. And you’re just there waiting.”  
(John Mark Comer, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*)

**>>Takeaway: Try 10 minutes of silence once before prayer or Scripture this week.**

## SCRIPTURE

### MEDITATE

- The Hebrew word for “meditate,” **hagah**, literally means “to murmur,” as in reading Scripture quietly under your breath. It can also mean “to growl over” (Eugene Peterson, *Eat This Book*). Meditating on scripture is to **“Chew on it.”**

Method: Here’s what that looks like for me:

- **READ TEXT:** Read the text **slowly, noting what stands out.** Then I **read it again.**

- **MEDITATE:** Reflecting on the passage, re-reading again and **considering its meaning for my life.**
- **PRAY:** Then I pray to God about what I heard about me, and my life from his Word.

## STUDY

- **Psalm 1: 1-2**
- At College Park Church: THINK, Sunday Classes , Small Groups, CPCi forums and classes
- **Tips for studying the Bible:**
  - Learn from **trusted teachers** with good theology.
  - Build a **library** with resource books.
  - Use a good **study Bible**.
  - Read with others in a **community**.

## MEMORIZE

- *If Jesus needed to memorize Scripture, how much more do we?*
- **Benefits of Memorization:**
  1. **We Hear God's Voice**
  2. **We Renew Our Minds:** We become what we meditate on
  3. **We Resist Temptation** (Psalm 119:11)
  4. **We Draw on God's Strength:** In times of pain and suffering (e.g. Jesus on the cross quoting Psalm 22).
- Scholars say one of the most common commands in Scripture is “**remember**.” We’re prone to forget, but memorizing Scripture helps us remember what we need to hear.

# SABBATH

## 4 Elements to Sabbath:

### 1. STOP

I feel most convinced about the Sabbath not because it is in the Ten Commandments, but because it goes back to Genesis—and looks like it is built into the grain of the universe for our good.

*“If you go against the grain of the universe, you get splinters.” (philosopher H.H. Farmer)*

In Gen 2—God stopped. Listen for the word “**finished**”

*“Thus the heavens and the earth were **finished**, and all the host of them. <sup>2</sup>And on the seventh day God **finished** his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.*

*<sup>3</sup>So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” (Gen. 2:1-3)*

God stopped. So we stop.

Our problem-- is that we're overloaded with *more* content & *more* activity than we need and **less space than we need**. I don't stop daily. And I don't stop weekly. And I even use spiritual stuff to outpace God and not let him stop me and love me. We need to stop.

## 2. REST

**“Rest”** means physical rest, mental rest, and emotional rest. Rest is life-giving replenishment.

*“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, **and he rested** on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.*

*<sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God **rested** from all his work that he had done in creation.” (Gen. 2:1-3)*

God stopped and rested on this day in order to *model* for us. That’s exactly what the Ten Commandments tells us:

*“<sup>8</sup> Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ... <sup>11</sup> **For** in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and **rested** on the seventh day. **Therefore** the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” (Exod. 20 :8-11)*

What exactly gives you rest? What replenishes you?

### >>Takeaway Exercise: “DO/DON’T DO” LIST.

- Take a sheet of paper, and draw a line down the middle of it.
- **Top left write “DON’T DO.” Top right write “DO”.**
- This is now your working guide to Sabbath.
- Start filling out on the left what you think you should **“NOT” do on a Sabbath**. These can be things that are work (like “email”) or distracting (like “checking social media”) or draining (like “cleaning the house”). Be simple and be practical.
- On the right put down things that you’d like to **“DO” on a Sabbath**. What feels restful for you? Something restful (like “nap”) or active (like “bike ride”) or calming (like “drink tea”). Write down what particularly rejuvenates you. (Then you can work with your spouse, if applicable, to find ways to make it work for the whole family.)

## 3. DELIGHT

When God stops creating, he looks on it all and delights in it.

*“<sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was **very good**. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” (Gen 1:31)*

*“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, ... <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day ... he rested (Gen 2:1-3)*

God looks at his world and observes: “This is good!” And we should too. Sabbath is not a drudgery. Sabbath is a delight.

What kinds of things do you delight in? The outdoors, reading a novel, attending live music events? Include those on your “DO/DON’T DO List”!

## 4. WORSHIP

After all, Jesus himself practiced worship on the Sabbath:

*“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And **as was his custom**, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read” (Luke 4:16).*

For most people, the best day for a Sabbath is Sunday. And the great news is that “worship” is built into that day!

*“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.*

*<sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and **made it holy**, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” (Gen 2:1-3)*

“**Holy**” means “**set apart**.” This day “set apart” for the Lord. Sabbath isn’t just a “day off”: it includes worship.

Isn’t this what you long for? When you put these four elements together: stop, rest, delight, and worship. It’s just what the ancient Jews used to say: “The Sabbath is a taste of heaven on earth.”

# FASTING

Fasting is arguably one of the most neglected spiritual practices in the Western world.

And because most of us haven’t had much exposure to it, we have so many questions.

## 1. DON’T BE SURPRISED THAT THIS IS NEW TO YOU.

- The Early Church fasted twice a week (on Wednesdays to remember the day of Jesus’ betrayal and on Fridays to remember Jesus’ death). But I have a seminary degree, and I didn’t know that until a few months ago!
- Richard Foster, writing in *Celebration of Discipline* in 1978 said, “[I]n my research I could not find a single book published on the subject of Christian fasting from 1861 to 1954, a period of nearly one hundred years” (*Celebration of Discipline*, p.47)
- Although fasting has been practiced regularly by global Christians in the South and East (such as Africa), we in the West have been mostly silent and unpracticed.

## 2. JESUS EXPECTS BUT DOESN’T COMMAND FASTING.

- Jesus says, “*When you fast...*” (Matt 6:16).
- There is nowhere in the NT where Jesus or the apostles command fasting. But here (and in Matt. 9:15) Jesus sets the expectation that we will fast.

## 3. FASTING MAY HELP YOU PHYSICALLY.

- Health benefits: “autophagy” (recycling damaged cells); “intermittent fasting” to lose weight.
- There is something beautiful about this: why should we be surprised that what God invites us to do for our souls is actually good for our bodies?

#### 4. THE PURPOSE OF FASTING IS ABSTAINING FROM FOOD TO BECOME MORE LIKE JESUS.

- Fasting is **abstaining from food**. Getting off social media, or doing a “TV fast” are good exercises in abstinence. But “Fasting” technically has to do with food. We don’t eat food, and we do drink water, over a period of time, for spiritual purposes.
- **3 Purposes:**
  1. **To Surrender to God**
    - “God, my body belongs to you.” “I don’t need food, I need you.”
  2. **To Become More Like Jesus**
    - “Could I be formed by God not just through my head, but through my stomach?”
    - Fasting breaks my attachments. What I really hunger for is God.
  3. **To Amplify Our Prayers**
    - Although you can do them independently—fasting and prayer go together. Fasting leads us to prayer.
    - Fasting sharpens our mind—we’re more alert, focused, and open.
    - The who’s-who of Scripture fasted and experienced God radically hearing and breaking through to act on behalf of their prayers:
      - Moses received divine access on the Mountain (Exod. 34:28-35). Elijah received His still, small voice (1 Kgs 19:8). Esther received deliverance for the Jews in Persia (Esther 4:16). Jesus received preparation for Satanic temptation (Matt 4). And Paul received radical conversion! (Acts 9:9). That’s just a few!

God may be waiting for us to fast and pray for him to act in a significant way. As Jesus said:

*“...[T]hat 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.” (Matt 6:16-18)*

>>**Takeaway:** Don’t plan a 40-day fast; I recommend considering a **24-hour fast** (skipping breakfast and lunch)--and how you could incorporate that in your life in some sort of regular rhythm: perhaps monthly or even weekly.

## NEXT STEPS

>>**SILENCE:** Silence 5 min each day this week (before prayer and Scripture)

>>**DO/DON’T DO LIST:** Complete a “DO/DON’T DO” list (with your spouse, if applicable). Try for 1 day as a test “Sabbath.”

>>Register for **The Disciplines** class (starting March 23)!

[yourchurch.com/cpci](http://yourchurch.com/cpci)