

# Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth

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## *Discussion Guide*

*Celebration of Discipline* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1998) explores the central spiritual practices of the Christian faith and provides a path to spiritual growth. The book celebrates twelve “classical disciplines,” which are divided into three categories, or movements of the Spirit: inward, outward, and corporate. Foster offers insights and examples of how these disciplines can become a part of our daily lives and bring us closer to God.

Permission is granted to reproduce this discussion guide.

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### Chapter 1

#### **Introduction / The Spiritual Disciplines: Door to Liberation**

*This chapter introduces the spiritual disciplines and shows how they can bring the abundance of God into the lives of Christians.*

1. Discuss your interest in the spiritual disciplines and why you are studying this book.
2. In your own words, explain the power of the spiritual disciplines and how they can open the door to liberation.
3. List and discuss the truths and common misconceptions about the spiritual disciplines.
4. Discuss some of the obstacles that prevent people from practicing the spiritual disciplines and benefiting from them. What help do God and the Bible provide?

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## Chapter 2

### **The Discipline of Meditation**

*This chapter explores the first of the four inward disciplines, meditation, which is the ability to hear and obey God's word.*

1. Explain what Christian meditation means to you. What benefits do you find most attractive?
2. Discuss the keys to and the purposes of meditation. List some common misconceptions.
3. List and discuss examples of meditation as found in the Bible.
4. What did you learn about meditation while reading this chapter?

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## Chapter 3

### **The Discipline of Prayer**

*This chapter examines one of the most powerful of the inward disciplines and offers practical advice about using it to walk with God.*

1. How do you view prayer? Share how it has affected your life and how your prayer life has changed over the years as your faith has matured.
2. Do you believe your prayers can change things—even God's mind? Explain.
3. How can prayer make a difference in your life, the lives of others, and the world?
4. List and discuss keys to successful intercession. What practical advice is given in this chapter concerning effective prayer habits?

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## Chapter 4

### **The Discipline of Fasting**

*This chapter describes examples of fasting in Scripture and how fasting can be utilized today to draw closer to God.*

1. How did this chapter change your views of fasting?
2. Discuss examples of fasting as found in the Bible. What does the Bible say about fasting? What did Jesus say about it?

3. List and compare some of the costs and benefits of fasting.
4. What practical lessons did you learn about fasting from reading this chapter? Did you have some misconceptions about fasting that were corrected by what you read? Explain.

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## Chapter 5

### **The Discipline of Study**

*This chapter looks at the fourth of the inward disciplines and the four steps involved.*

1. How does God change us through study?
2. What attitudes and efforts are important in studying a book? Why is studying a book not a simple task?
3. Discuss the intrinsic and extrinsic rules that govern the discipline of studying a book.
4. List and discuss some rewards of study.

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## Chapter 6

### **The Discipline of Simplicity**

*This chapter examines this outward discipline that begins with an inward focus.*

1. Discuss the inward and outward aspects of simplicity.
2. How does God liberate us through simplicity?
3. How does the discipline of simplicity apply to reading the Bible?
4. Discuss the ten controlling principles for the outward expression of simplicity.

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## Chapter 7

### **The Discipline of Solitude**

*This chapter provides insights into this state of mind that gives inner fulfillment.*

1. Discuss the differences between loneliness and solitude.
2. How did Jesus model the discipline of solitude?

3. How have you practiced solitude in the past, and what have you gained from practicing this discipline?
4. Discuss the connection between solitude and silence. Compare the fruits of silence with the fruits of solitude.

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## **Chapter 8**

### **The Discipline of Submission**

*This chapter provides a better understanding of this valuable but often-abused discipline.*

1. How and why has the discipline of submission been misconstrued and abused?
2. Discuss the touchstone for the biblical understanding of submission (Mark 8:34).
3. Discuss the freedom that comes with submission. List some of the benefits.
4. List and discuss the seven acts of submission.

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## **Chapter 9**

### **The Discipline of Service**

*This chapter provides encouragement to serve God and others.*

1. When you think of service to God and others, what thoughts and images come to mind?
2. Discuss how Jesus modeled service and what he taught about it.
3. Explore the benefits and costs of service. What is given up and what is gained?
4. Discuss the liberty that the discipline of service provides.

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## **Chapter 10**

### **The Discipline of Confession**

*This chapter explores this corporate discipline that releases healing power.*

1. Why is confession a difficult discipline? List some of the obstacles to its use.
2. Share some of your experiences in the discipline of confession.

3. List and discuss what is needed in the giving and receiving of confession.
4. What does the Bible teach us about confession?

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## **Chapter 11**

### **The Discipline of Worship**

*This chapter examines how worship leads to spiritual growth.*

1. Explain what worship means to you. Share a meaningful worship experience from your past, and tell why it was meaningful.
2. Discuss ways to make worship a priority. List some of the obstacles that distract us from worship.
3. What are some of the keys to preparing for worship? What is gained from worship as a spiritual discipline?
4. What did you learn in this chapter about avenues into worship?

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## **Chapter 12**

### **The Discipline of Guidance**

*This chapter provides models and insights into this corporate discipline.*

1. Why does the author list guidance among the corporate disciplines?
2. What can be learned about this discipline from the models presented?
3. What is the purpose of a spiritual director?
4. Discuss dangers and limits of corporate guidance.

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## **Chapter 13**

### **The Discipline of Celebration**

*This chapter suggests ways to practice this discipline and celebrate the goodness of God.*

1. List some benefits of the discipline of celebration, and discuss why it is central to all the spiritual disciplines.
2. What is necessary for genuine celebration?

3. How should celebration be practiced? Discuss ways to encourage celebration.
4. What did you learn about the path to joy from reading this chapter?

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