

LIFT

Ministry Group January Resource

Ten Overlooked Spiritual Disciplines.

Most Christians' spiritual formation centers around three primary disciplines: prayer, worship, and Bible study. However, there are several other spiritual disciplines, often overlooked, that can add a rich dimension to our relationship with God.

Journaling: to be alert to my life through writing and reflecting on God's presence and activity in, around, and through me.

Silence: to free myself from the addiction to and distraction of noise so I can be totally present to the Lord; to open myself to God in the place beyond words.

Solitude: to leave people behind and enter into time alone with God.

Fasting: to let go of an appetite in order to seek God on matters of deep concern for others, myself and the world.

Memorization: to carry the life-shaping words of God in me at all times and in all places.

Discuss: If you incorporate any of these into your daily devotional life, share with the others how it impacts you spiritually.

Definitions taken from Adele Ahlberg Calhoun: Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us.



The Pastor & Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation is the process of cultivating a relationship with God through Spirit-empowered disciplines which transform and shape us into Christ's likeness.

Discuss: What spiritual disciplines comprise your devotional life? How do those disciplines draw you nearer to God or help develop Christ's nature in you?

Spiritual formation is a critical component of the discipleship journey of every believer. Unfortunately, many pastors have chosen to move beyond the need for their own continued formation and have become merely proponents, rather than practitioners of it.

Ruth Haley Barton makes this observation: "Christian leaders are preaching, teaching and casting vision for a spirituality that they themselves are not experiencing in any kind of a substantive way."⁽¹⁾

Discuss: Do you practice what you preach? Are there spiritual disciplines you promote, but don't practice? Where could your devotional life be strengthened?

(1) Ruth Haley Barton, "How the Spiritual Formation of the Pastor Affects Spiritual Formation in the Congregation," <https://transformingcenter.org/2010/05/it-begins-with-you-how-the-spiritual-formation-of-the-pastor-affects-spiritual-formation-in-the-congregation/>

Ten Overlooked Spiritual Disciplines (Cont.)

Meditation: is a long, ardent gaze at God, His work and His Word. Christian meditation is about reflecting on God's work and God's Word. It's about slowing down to reflect on His goodness in creation or to reflect on His promises in Scripture.

Listening: to quiet the inner and outer noise so I can open my heart and listen for God's voice.

Discuss: What outer noise keeps you from hearing God's voice?

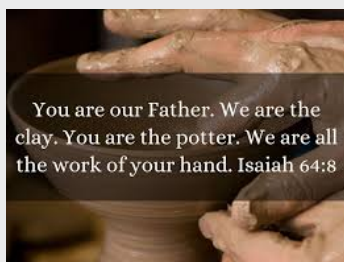
Sabbath: to set apart one day a week for rest and worship of God.

Discuss: How well do you Sabbath? Do you spend time doing things that are life giving? That strengthen you emotionally, physically or spiritually? Or is your "sabbath" simply a day off from the church?

Simplicity/Slowing: to curb my addiction to busyness, hurry and workaholism; to learn to savor the moment.

Discuss: Be honest? Are you addicted to busyness? How much time does technology (social media) consume your day?

Gratitude: to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting to live with a grateful heart, cognizant of God's work in my life and my abundant resources.



Definitions taken from Adele Ahlberg Calhoun: Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us.

How does spiritual formation benefit a pastor?

By deepening their personal relationship with God, ministers can more effectively lead and guide their congregation, provide greater empathy, authenticity, and wisdom when addressing spiritual needs, and ensure their own spiritual health and resilience in ministry. (Derived from several online sources.)

Enhanced ability to lead: By actively engaging in spiritual practices, pastors gain a deeper understanding of their own faith, enabling them to articulate and teach spiritual truths with greater clarity and conviction.

Improved pastoral care: A strong personal spiritual life equips pastors to better connect with individuals facing challenges, offering compassionate support and guidance based on their own lived experience.

Greater emotional resilience: Regular spiritual disciplines can help pastors manage stress and maintain emotional stability when dealing with the demands of ministry.

Authenticity in ministry: When a pastor is actively growing in their own spiritual life, they can model authentic faith to their congregation, inspiring others to deepen their own relationship with God.

Discernment and wisdom: Through spiritual formation, pastors can develop a greater ability to discern God's will and make wise decisions in ministry situations.

Personal renewal: Engaging in spiritual practices can be a source of personal renewal and rejuvenation for pastors, preventing burnout and promoting a healthy balance in their lives.

Discuss: Which of these areas could you stand to grow in?

[\(https://www.georgefox.edu/seminary/articles/spiritual-formation-biblical.html#:~:text=The Apostle Paul also notes,Spirit"\)](https://www.georgefox.edu/seminary/articles/spiritual-formation-biblical.html#:~:text=The Apostle Paul also notes,Spirit) (emphasis added).

[\(https://www.ministrybrands.com/church/management/pastor#:~:text=Spiritual Leadership: A pastor assists,programs, and small group leadership.\)](https://www.ministrybrands.com/church/management/pastor#:~:text=Spiritual Leadership: A pastor assists,programs, and small group leadership.)

[\(https://renovare.org/about/ideas/spiritual-formation#:~:text=Spiritual Formation helps us reclaim,2 Cor 4:16\).](https://renovare.org/about/ideas/spiritual-formation#:~:text=Spiritual Formation helps us reclaim,2 Cor 4:16).)

[\(https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2013/how-does-mission-relate-to-spiritual-formation#:~:text=Involvement in mission supports spiritual formation because,see others come to faith in Christ\)](https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2013/how-does-mission-relate-to-spiritual-formation#:~:text=Involvement in mission supports spiritual formation because,see others come to faith in Christ)

[\(https://ministryvitals.com/the-role-of-a-spiritual-formation-pastor/#:~:text=Personal Spiritual Formation: Spiritual Formation,empathize with and guide others.\)](https://ministryvitals.com/the-role-of-a-spiritual-formation-pastor/#:~:text=Personal Spiritual Formation: Spiritual Formation,empathize with and guide others.)