



Why Spiritual Practices?

- "The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people." (Foster)
- "God intends the disciplines of the spiritual life to be for ordinary human beings: people who have jobs, who care for children, who wash dishes and mow lawns. In fact, the disciplines are best exercised in the midst of our relationships with our husband or wife, our brothers and sisters, our friends and neighbors." (Foster)



Why Spiritual Practices?

- Spiritual practices help us see past the "materialistic base" of our surrounding culture.
- Spiritual practices give us a more effective way to address our sinful habits than the unsuccessful "frontal assault" of increased willpower.



Why Spiritual Practices?

- Our "inner righteousness," both in salvation and sanctification, is a free gift that is received from God. But, spiritual practices help to further open doors to God's transforming work.
- Spiritual practices can very easily be turned into soul-suffocating laws. They can be used to prop up our pride, make us fearful to lose control, and judge those who don't measure up.



Meditation Misunderstandings

- Meditation in Eastern religions seeks to empty the mind, lose any sense of individual personality, and become peacefully detached from the world.
- Biblical meditation seeks to fill the mind with Christ, find our individual value in being made in God's image, and engage the world as Spirit-empowered peacemakers.



Days of Distraction

- "In contemporary society, our Adversary majors in three things: noise, hurry, and crowds. If he can keep us engaged in 'much-ness' and 'many-ness,' he will rest satisfied." (Foster)



Friends of God

Exodus 33:7-11 – ⁷ Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the “tent of meeting.” Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. ⁸ And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. ⁹ As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses.

Friends of God

Exodus 33:7-11 (cont.) – ¹⁰ Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent. ¹¹ The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.

Friends of God

- Moses was fully enveloped in the reality of God's presence.
- Moses had a relationship with God that was "face to face, as one speaks to a friend."
- This happened "outside the camp, some distance away..."
- The rest of the community was content to respect God from a "reverent distance."



Friends of God

Exodus 20:18-21 – ¹⁸ When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance ¹⁹ and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."
²⁰ Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."
²¹ The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

Friends of God

- The greater community was content with "mediated religion."
- To come near to God is to be changed. We are afraid of that change. What will the holiness of God do to me with its refining fire?
- Moses "approached the thick darkness where God was."



Friends of God

John 15:15-16 – ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last..."

Friends of God

- Servants must keep a reverent distance. Friends are invited to come close.
- "Jesus has not stopped acting and speaking. He is resurrected and at work in our world. He is not idle, nor has he developed laryngitis. He is alive and among us as our Priest to forgive us, our Prophet to teach us, our King to rule us, and our Shepherd to guide us." (Foster)

Friends of God

John 10:2-4, 11, 14-16 – ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep... and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out... He goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice... ¹¹"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... I know my sheep and my sheep know me—¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. They will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

Closing Reflections

- Will you commit to utilizing spiritual practices in order to become a deeper person over the next 10 weeks?
- Can you identify areas of your life where noise, hurry, and crowds distract you from God's presence? How can you limit or eliminate one of them?
- If you have been following God from a "reverent distance," accept the invitation to know Him as a friend.
- Choose a day and time this week to spend 15 minutes meditating on 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.
