

DEEPER

Dates: Sunday 5th January to Sunday 26th January 2025

Purpose of this campaign: To encourage our people to go deeper in God this year by teaching them about the richness of these as foundations/disciplines for Christian transformation in 2025.

Key texts for this campaign: Psalms

- **Week 1:** Deeper: What is Spiritual Formation?
- **Week 2:** Inward Disciplines: Christian Meditation and Study.
- **Week 3:** Outward Disciplines: Simplicity and Submission.
- **Week 4:** Corporate Disciplines: Confession and Guidance.

Week 1: What is Spiritual Formation?

Date: Sunday 5th January 2025

Key Point of this week: To understand the benefit of going deeper into spiritual formation and disciplines in 2025. To take a next step and add these to our Christian life in 2025.

Key Scriptures:

Isaiah 33:5-6

2 Corinthians 3:18

Psalms 42:1-2

Supporting points to key point:

PART 1

Psalms 42:7

⁷Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me

We hit upon the meaning of *deep calls to deep* when we recognize that human needs are great, but the riches of God are greater. Our wisdom is shallow, but his knowledge and judgments are unsearchable ([Romans 11:33–34](#)). God’s thoughts are deep ([Psalm 92:5](#)). His love is as deep as his immense heart ([Ephesians 3:18–19](#)), as he proved when he gave His only begotten Son to die for us ([John 3:16](#)). The height, breadth, and depth of God’s resources are without measure. From the depth of his despair, the psalmist found help in the depth of God’s goodness, <https://www.gotquestions.org/deep-calls-to-deep.html>

God wants us to press on this year, going deeper into the things of God.

Philippians 3:12-14

¹²Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

A. The theology behind Spiritual Formation

Richard Foster in his book: Celebration of Disciplines says, “*Disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths. They invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm. They urge us to be the answer to the hollow world.*”

Spiritual Formation is the process in which we get a solid foundation of Christ in our lives.

To understand Spiritual Formation (SF) we need to understand God’s agenda for creation itself.

Key Scripture:

2 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁸we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Go deeper this year!

Deep calls to deep, spiritual formation and disciplines are not just for those in leadership, but for all who cry out to go adventure into the depths of God and be more like him daily.

Psalm 42:1-2

*¹As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.*

*²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?*

As Pauls points out in Acts 17:28, already we all live and move and have our being in him, but he wants to take it to a whole new level.

Acts 17:28

²⁸ 'For in him we live and move and have our being.'

So, he “calls” and “draws” us to intimately know & be known by him who would be **all** in all. He has hard wired “eternity’s call” within every human heart & upon creation itself. Humans in particular- with our divine image & sentience, have been granted favour that goes way beyond anything the rest of creation enjoys.

We are designed to grow and transform into His image

But although we begin as children, we are designed to grow & transform into a divine like glory.

2 Corinthians 3:18

we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Romans 12:2

²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...

Our spiritual transformation is actually vital to God's agenda of total mutual inhabitation/interpenetration.

Spiritual Formation is the way Christ is formed within us

B. What exactly is spiritual formation?

With God's agenda in mind, Paul says in

Galatians 4:19

*¹⁹My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until **Christ is formed in you...***

So, a basic definition of SF would be something like this:

SF is the life-long process of Christ being formed within us, transforming and enabling us to know God & be known by God, as all in all.

Notice it is a process involving the metamorphosis of our entire being over our whole life span.
*Physical Birth/Body ... Spiritual Rebirth ... Transformation/Renewal ...
Consummation/Glorification*

C. Why we need spiritual formation?

Jesus practiced it and we need it.

Most Christians will experience a life-long tension within their spirituality that looks something like this:

Faith --- Unbelief --- Righteousness --- Sinfulness Passion --- Apathy Relationship --- Religion
Intimacy --- Distance

If Jesus needed to a level spiritual formation, then we definitely do.

Embracing spiritual formation deepens and invigorates my relationship with God
Only to the degree that Christ is formed in me, do I know God & allow him to be "all in all" of me. In John 15, Jesus was pretty clear about the need to abide/remain in him because apart from him we can do nothing, bear no lasting fruit, or even spiritually stay alive. Apart from him

there is no access or relationship with the Father- Jesus alone is the way truth and life. John 14:6 And as Paul reminds us, Christ in us is our only hope of glory Col 1:27.

Embracing your spiritual formation will enrich, deepen and invigorate your relationship with God.

So, in summary, we want to develop a “life rhythm” of spiritual formation within community.

*“The times of greatest failure in my life have usually occurred when I have not been in a **rhythm** of daily communion with God, times when I was not intentionally being formed in Christlikeness. By contrast, the times of intentional abiding in Christ often resulted in ongoing heart change, healing of soul wounds, a sense of being strongly anchored in the love of Christ, and progress in the gradual journey of transformation in Christlikeness.” (Greg Beech)*

PART 2:

Identifying & categorising the 17 spiritual disciplines practiced or taught by Jesus.

What are spiritual Disciplines?

Spiritual Disciplines are consistent and deliberate practices that help shape not just our character, but our entire way of life because they connect us more deeply with God. They help to us live as Jesus lived and to value what Jesus values. They ground us in God’s reality and in his agenda.

There are 17 main Spiritual Disciplines

Solitude, Silence, Fasting, Simplicity, Chastity, Secrecy, Sacrifice, Meditation, Study, Worship, Celebration, Service, Prayer, Fellowship, Confession, Submission, Guidance.

They can be put into categories as follows, Inward, Outward and Corporate Disciplines from Richard Foster Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth book

We are going to cover two per week:

- Week 2 Inward Disciplines: Meditation and the Word
- Week 3 Outward Disciplines: Simplicity and Submission
- Week 4 Corporate Disciplines: Confession and Guidance

We are going to go through the final three each week: Inward Disciplines, Outward Disciplines and Corporate Disciplines.

A healthy engagement in spiritual disciplines will result in accelerated Spiritual Formation. The disciplines themselves are not burdensome. Remember, Jesus said my yoke is easy and my burden is light. So, these are not religious drudgery!

Connect Questions

5th January What is Spiritual Formation?

GATHER:

- Any habit around our faith can become superficial. Do you think it's harder for us than for Christians in the past?
- Are there difficulties with engaging in spiritual disciplines? How does it help you to know that God is the one doing the transforming, you are just pursuing him and abiding in him as commanded?

GROW:

- Is there a spiritual discipline on the list that you have never tried? Mentoring from those who have been walking with Jesus longer can help. Can someone in your connect help you brainstorm ways to start?
- Can you answer where, when & how you personally find connecting with God easiest? What can be your next step this year in starting 2025 well, to go deeper?

GO:

- Why do I want to connect with God? Why should someone who doesn't know God want to connect with him (beyond salvation)?
- How would you explain to a non-believer the way your faith foundations have grown over the years (what the process of spiritual formation has looked like for you)?

Week 2: Inward Disciplines (Meditation and Study)

Date: Sunday 12th January 2025

Key Point of this week: To understand and apply the Inward Disciplines as part of Spiritual Formation: Meditation and Studying the Word.

Key Scripture: Psalms

Supporting points to key point:

Inward Disciplines venture through the first four of our spiritual formation. Meditation introduces us to the inner life of peace and ease, prayer brings us into the deepest and highest work of the human spirit to commune with God, fasting teaches us to sustain and study transforms our minds. The next four disciplines are about growing in God in our “inner life.”

Meditation: silence and contemplation

In a culture of noise, hurry and crowds, God is calling us away to the inner world of silence and contemplation. Meditation is the practice of listening to God's voice and allowing his word to sink into the soul. It involves reflective, contemplative prayer and moments of solitude, where the individual focuses on a passage of scripture or a theme. This discipline is not about emptying the mind but filling it with God's truth and presence.

Psalms 1:1-3

³*Blessed is the one*

*who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,*

²*but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.*

³*That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.*

1. Definition of Christian Meditation: Meditation is the practice of hearing God's voice and obeying his word. It involves a deep focus on God's presence, scripture, or a particular theme, with the goal of fostering intimacy with God.

Unlike Eastern meditation, which seeks to empty the mind, Christian meditation seeks to fill the mind with God's truth and presence.

2. Purpose of Meditation: The primary goal of meditation is to create an inner stillness that allows one to hear God's voice more clearly.

It is a way of opening oneself up to divine guidance, experiencing God's peace, and deepening the relationship with him.

3. Biblical and Historical Foundation: Meditation is rooted in scripture and has a long tradition within the Christian faith. Biblical figures like Isaac, David, and Jesus who practiced meditative prayer.

Throughout history, Christian mystics and saints have used meditation as a means of deepening their spiritual lives.

4. Different Forms of Meditation:

- **Scriptural Meditation:** One of the most common forms involves focusing on a passage of scripture, reflecting deeply on its meaning, and allowing God to speak through it.
- **Meditation on Creation:** Another form involves contemplating God's presence in nature, reflecting on his power and beauty as revealed through creation.
- **Recollective Meditation:** This practice involves quieting the mind and heart, drawing one's thoughts toward God, and resting in his presence.
- **Meditation on Events and God's Work:** Believers can meditate on God's actions in their lives or historical events, seeking to discern his guidance and purpose.

5. The Importance of Silence and Solitude: Meditation requires intentional times of silence and solitude, creating space to focus entirely on God without distractions.

By withdrawing from the busyness of life, Christians can centre their attention and tune their hearts to hear from God.

6. Practical Steps for Meditation: Finding a quiet, comfortable place to practice meditation regularly.

Begin by calming the mind, perhaps by breathing deeply or reciting a short prayer to centre thoughts on God.

Choose a specific scripture, theme, or aspect of God's character to meditate on and let it occupy the mind, inviting God to speak through the reflection.

7. Benefits of Meditation: Meditation leads to a deeper awareness of God's presence and voice, fostering inner peace and spiritual clarity.

It cultivates a more intimate relationship with God, helping Christians align their hearts with his will.

Meditation can also bring transformation, leading to personal renewal, guidance, and empowerment in living out the Christian life.

8. Avoiding Distractions: Distractions and wandering thoughts are common but encourages persistence and patience. The goal is not perfection but openness to God's voice in the midst of the process.

Meditation is a vital discipline for spiritual growth, emphasizing its role in helping Christian's experience God's presence more deeply and align themselves with his purposes.

Studying the word: aligning our thoughts to his.

Study involves engaging deeply with scripture and other spiritual texts to transform the mind. There is a difference between just superficial reading and truly understanding God's Word. The discipline of study reshapes thoughts and attitudes, enabling believers to know and experience the truth that sets them free.

Psalm 119:15-16

¹²*Praise be to you, Lord;*

teach me your decrees.

¹³***With my lips I recount***

all the laws that come from your mouth.

¹⁴*I rejoice in following your statutes*

as one rejoices in great riches.

¹⁵***I meditate on your precepts***

and consider your ways.

¹⁶*I delight in your decrees;*

I will not neglect your word.

Study is highlighted as a vital practice for spiritual growth and transformation. Study goes beyond merely reading scripture or spiritual texts; it involves focused attention, reflection, and application. Here are the key points from the chapter on study:

1. Study as a Discipline: Study is presented as one of the primary ways the mind is renewed and transformed. Spiritual growth depends on the ability to focus and engage with the truth of God's word and other meaningful texts.

It requires more than casual reading; it involves intentional, systematic examination of ideas, allowing those truths to shape thoughts, actions, and beliefs.

2. Transformation through Study: The purpose of study is not just to gain knowledge, but to be transformed by what is learned. By filling the mind with God's truth, believers can replace falsehoods and negative patterns of thought with those aligned to scripture.

The mind plays a crucial role in shaping character and actions. Therefore, changing one's thought patterns through study leads to a more Christlike life.

3. Distinction between Study and Devotional Reading: There is a distinction between study and devotional reading. Devotional reading is focused on connecting with God in a personal and emotional way, while study involves an analytical approach aimed at understanding and applying knowledge.

Both are important, but study requires critical thinking and sustained concentration on the meaning, context, and implications of a text.

4. The Four Steps of Study: Four essential steps involved in effective study:

- **Repetition:** Regularly exposing the mind to the subject being studied helps ingrain ideas and truths. Repetition deepens understanding and makes it easier to apply what is learned.
- **Concentration:** Focusing attention on the material at hand allows the mind to engage deeply and absorb the truth being studied. Distractions must be minimized for effective study.
- **Comprehension:** Understanding the meaning and significance of the material is key. This step involves grappling with ideas and considering their implications, asking questions like, "What does this mean?" and "How does this apply to my life?"
- **Reflection:** Reflection allows the truth to sink into one's heart, leading to personal transformation. Foster stresses that reflection bridges the gap between intellectual understanding and practical application.

5. The Object of Study:

- **Scripture:** The primary object of Christian study is the Bible. Foster stresses that scripture should be studied not just for knowledge but for transformation. The goal is to internalize God's word so that it shapes every aspect of life.
- **Other Christian Writings:** the study of spiritual classics and theological writings that have guided Christians through history. These works can provide insights and challenge believers to deeper faith and understanding.
- **God's Creation:** Study is not limited to books; believers can also study God's creation. Observing the natural world with an awareness of God's handiwork can deepen one's awe and reverence for the Creator.

7. The Role of Experience in Study: Experience plays a role in study. Reflecting on personal experiences and the experiences of others can help illuminate truth. Studying past experiences helps believers see patterns, learn from mistakes, and grow in wisdom.

8. Study in Community: Practice of studying in community with other believers is essential. Engaging in group study allows for diverse perspectives and deeper understanding.

Discussion and shared insights can enrich one's personal study and challenge assumptions.

9. Attitude of Humility and Teachability: A humble and teachable attitude is crucial for effective study. Approaching study with a desire to be taught, corrected, and changed by God leads to genuine transformation.

He warns against pride or intellectual arrogance, reminding readers that the goal of study is not to accumulate knowledge for its own sake but to become more like Christ.

10. Practical Application: Study must ultimately lead to action. True study should change behaviour, attitudes, and character. The truths learned should be put into practice in daily life.

He encourages believers to evaluate how study influences their actions, relationships, and decisions, ensuring that it leads to spiritual growth and godly living.

Conclusion: Study is a powerful tool for spiritual formation, helping believers renew their minds and align their thoughts with God's truth. It involves intentional engagement with scripture and other sources of wisdom, and its ultimate goal is transformation, not just knowledge. Study equips Christians to think more clearly, live more faithfully, and grow closer to God in their daily lives.

Week 3: Outward Disciplines (Simplicity and Submission)

Date: Sunday 19th January 2025

Key Point of this week: To understand and apply the Outward disciplines of Spiritual Formation: Simplicity and Submission.

Key Scripture: Psalms

Supporting points to key point:

Simplicity: learning to trust and be content

Simplicity is about living with a focus on God, freeing oneself from the pursuit of materialism, wealth, and status. A simple life allows individuals to experience greater contentment and clarity, and to seek God's kingdom above all else. It's about valuing spiritual riches over worldly possessions.

Psalm 131:1-3

*¹My heart is not proud, Lord,
my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.
²But I have calmed and quieted myself,
I am like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child I am content.
³Israel, put your hope in the Lord
both now and forevermore.*

Simplicity is presented as both an inward reality and an outward lifestyle that frees individuals from the tyranny of materialism, anxiety, and a cluttered life. Simplicity is a central Christian virtue, deeply rooted in seeking God's kingdom first. Here are the key points from the chapter on simplicity:

1. Simplicity as an Inward Reality: True simplicity begins in the heart. It is an inward attitude of trust in God and contentment with what he provides, not merely the external reduction of possessions or activities.

Simplicity flows from a focus on God's kingdom and an internal detachment from the materialism, greed, and excesses of the world. The heart of simplicity is to trust that God will supply all needs (Matthew 6:33).

2. Freedom from Materialism: Simplicity liberates people from the overwhelming desire for more—more wealth, possessions, and status. It enables individuals to break free from the bondage of materialism, consumerism, and the constant pursuit of accumulating things.

This freedom allows Christians to live lightly, unburdened by the stress, debt, and distractions that often come from overindulgence and attachment to material goods.

3. Simplicity and Anxiety: One of the core benefits of living simply is the release from anxiety and worry about possessions and the future. Foster points out that much of modern anxiety stems from concerns over wealth, status, and security.

Simplicity helps individuals trust God's provision, leading to greater peace and contentment. It shifts the focus from worrying about material concerns to trusting God's care.

4. Simplicity and the Kingdom of God: Simplicity is deeply connected to seeking God's kingdom first. Foster cites Jesus' teachings in Matthew 6:25-34, where Jesus instructs his followers not to worry about food, drink, or clothing but to trust in God's provision as they seek his kingdom and righteousness.

For Christians, simplicity means prioritizing God's purposes above worldly concerns, focusing on what truly matters—living according to God's will.

5. Simplicity as an Outward Lifestyle: While simplicity is an inward condition of the heart, it naturally expresses itself in outward actions. A lifestyle that reflects this inward reality by living with fewer possessions, using resources wisely, and resisting the cultural push for excess.

This outward expression includes decluttering both physical spaces and schedules, making room for what is truly important—relationships, service, and spiritual growth.

6. Simplicity and Stewardship: Simplicity involves responsible stewardship of resources. Foster encourages believers to live in a way that honours God by avoiding waste, living within their means, and using their resources to help others.

Christians are called to live with a sense of gratitude and contentment, recognizing that all they have comes from God, and they are to use their resources for his purposes, not merely for personal gain.

7. Three Inner Attitudes of Simplicity: Three key attitudes that cultivate simplicity:

- First, recognizing that all we have is a gift from God. This fosters gratitude and trust.
- Second, knowing that God's care is sufficient for our needs. This reduces the compulsion to worry or accumulate more than is necessary.
- Third, making what we have available to others. This leads to generosity and a willingness to share with those in need.

8. Simplicity in Relation to Money and Possessions: The dangers of both wealth and poverty, advocating for a balanced approach that avoids extremes. The Bible doesn't condemn possessions but warns against placing trust or identity in them.

He encourages believers to resist the lure of luxury and accumulation and instead to embrace moderation, generosity, and a life free from the enslavement of debt or greed.

9. Practical Expressions of Simplicity: Practical suggestions for cultivating simplicity in everyday life, such as:

- **Rejecting anything that produces addiction.** Whether it is a substance, habit, or possession, anything that controls us needs to be reevaluated.
- **Living below one's means.** Foster advises spending less than one earns and being content with modest living.
- **Avoiding unnecessary purchases.** Discernment is key to avoid buying things that are not needed or that perpetuate the cycle of consumerism.
- **Sharing with others.** He encourages believers to give generously to those in need and to practice hospitality.

10. Simplicity and the Environment: There is a connection between simplicity and environmental stewardship. Living simply helps reduce the strain on the earth's resources and promotes sustainable living.

Simplicity encourages conscious decisions about consumption, such as buying products that are ethically made, reducing waste, and being mindful of the environmental impact of lifestyle choices.

11. Simplicity and Spiritual Freedom: Simplicity leads to greater spiritual freedom. By removing the clutter and distractions of excessive possessions, individuals can focus more fully on God and the things that matter most.

Simplicity opens up space—both physically and spiritually—for prayer, reflection, relationships, and service to others.

12. Cautions against Legalism: Warns against turning simplicity into a legalistic practice, where the focus is solely on external actions rather than the heart. Simplicity must be a response to God's grace, not a rigid set of rules or a means of proving one's spirituality.

True simplicity flows from the heart and results in joy, peace, and freedom—not guilt or pride over one's ability to live with less.

Conclusion: Simplicity as both an inner attitude of trust in God and an outward lifestyle of moderation and generosity. It calls believers to reject materialism, embrace contentment, and focus on God's kingdom. Simplicity is not just about reducing possessions but about living with purpose, freeing oneself from distractions to live fully for God. By practicing simplicity,

Christians can experience greater peace, freedom, and joy in their relationship with God and their interactions with the world.

Submission: living a life of surrender

Submission is the practice of yielding to God and others in humility and service. It is important to surrender the need for control, practicing self-denial, and seeking the welfare of others. This discipline counters pride and promotes peace within communities.

Psalm 139:23-24

*²³Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.*

*²⁴See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Submission is explored as an essential Christian practice that frees believers from the burden of needing to have their own way and allows them to embrace humility, service, and love. Submission is not about self-denial for its own sake, but about relinquishing control and trusting in God's sovereignty, leading to greater freedom and joy. Here are the key points from the chapter on submission:

1. The Meaning of Submission: Submission as the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way. It involves yielding to God and to others in a spirit of humility and love.

Submission is not about becoming passive or losing one's identity, but about setting aside the need to dominate, control, or insist on personal preferences.

2. Freedom through Submission: One of the core benefits of submission is the freedom it brings. By giving up the need to always be in control, individuals are liberated from anger, resentment, and bitterness that often come when their will is thwarted.

Submission allows believers to live in peace with others and with themselves. It frees them from the need to manipulate situations or people to achieve their desires.

3. Jesus as the Model for Submission: Jesus is the ultimate example of submission. Throughout his life and ministry, Jesus submitted to the Father's will, culminating in his submission to the cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

Jesus also demonstrated submission in his relationships with others, serving humbly and putting the needs of others before His own. This self-giving love is the heart of submission.

4. Submission to God: The primary act of submission is surrendering to God. Foster emphasizes that believers must first submit to God's will and authority in their lives. This involves trusting God's plan, obeying his commands, and accepting His guidance.

Submission to God is foundational for Christian discipleship and is an act of faith, recognizing that God's ways are higher and wiser than human ways.

5. Submission to Others: Submission in various human relationships as a practical expression of Christian love. This includes:

- **Submission in the Family:** Mutual submission within the family. He encourages husbands, wives, parents, and children to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21). This creates an environment of love, respect, and service.
- **Submission to Authorities:** Christians are called to submit to governmental, church, and workplace authorities, except when such submission would require disobedience to God. This reflects a spirit of humility and respect for the structures God has ordained.
- **Submission in the Church:** Believers to submit to their church leaders and to one another within the Christian community. This fosters unity, accountability, and spiritual growth.

6. The Limits of Submission: Submission has limits. It is not a call to become a doormat or tolerate abuse, injustice, or exploitation. There are times when standing up for righteousness and justice requires refusing to submit to corrupt or sinful authority.

Submission is always rooted in love and truth, and believers must discern when to submit and when to resist in order to honour God.

7. The Discipline of Submission and Self-Denial: Submission often involves self-denial, but not in the sense of suppressing one's true self. Foster explains that biblical submission is about setting aside selfish desires and preferences for the sake of others, reflecting the self-giving nature of Christ.

Through submission, believers learn to let go of their egos and embrace a life of humility, which leads to greater spiritual maturity.

8. Submission and Service: Submission naturally leads to a life of service. When believers submit to others, they seek to serve rather than be served, imitating Jesus who came to serve and give his life for others (Mark 10:45).

Service is the practical outworking of submission. It involves placing the needs and interests of others above one's own, leading to acts of love, generosity, and care.

9. Submission and Forgiveness: Submission is closely tied to forgiveness. When believers submit to God and to one another, they let go of the need for revenge or holding grudges. Submission involves releasing others from their debts and grievances, as Jesus taught in the Lord's Prayer.

Forgiveness becomes possible through submission, as it releases the desire to assert one's own rights and instead offers grace and mercy to others.

10. Practical Expressions of Submission: Foster offers practical advice on how to practice submission in everyday life. This includes:

- **Learning to Listen:** Believers are encouraged to listen to others without the need to defend their own views or insist on their own way.
- **Holding Opinions Lightly:** Submission involves holding opinions with humility, being open to correction or new insights from others.
- **Yielding to Others:** In situations of conflict or decision-making, submission may involve letting go of personal preferences in order to maintain peace and unity.

11. Submission and Mutuality: The importance of mutual submission. Christian submission is not one-sided; it involves a reciprocal relationship where both parties submit to one another in love.

Mutual submission creates an environment of respect, where everyone's needs and perspectives are considered and valued.

12. The Joy of Submission: Contrary to the negative connotations often associated with submission, Foster emphasizes that true submission brings joy. It is a discipline that leads to freedom, peace, and deeper relationships.

When believers practice submission, they experience the joy that comes from loving and serving others, reflecting the heart of Christ.

Conclusion: Submission as a discipline that leads to spiritual freedom and maturity. By surrendering to God and submitting to others, believers are freed from the need to control, manipulate, or dominate. Submission fosters humility, service, and love, allowing Christians to live in peace and harmony with others. Through the practice of submission, believers grow in Christlikeness, learning to trust God's will and embrace a life of sacrificial love and self-giving.

Connect Questions

19th January 2025 Outward Disciplines (Simplicity and Submission)

GATHER:

- Share some of the choices you've made (if you're comfortable) around avoiding purchasing or consuming certain things because they don't align with God's kingdom? Remember the Holy Spirit speaks to each of us about different things -we don't just get handed a list of banned products when we accept Jesus.
- Have any of you experienced specific examples of freedom in submission?

GROW:

- What can you do this week to simplify your life?
- As we grow up from children and grow more aware of who we are (our personality & value), we can assert our preferences in the name of confidence. But growing up in faith calls us to behave differently. Is there a sphere of your life where you could put your preferences aside for the sake of unity and relationship?

GO:

- How would you explain what sets spiritual simplicity apart from minimalism and other "simplify your life" trends in the world?

Week 4: Corporate Disciplines (Confession and Guidance)

Date: Sunday 26th January 2025

Key Point of this week: To understand and apply the Corporate Disciplines for Spiritual Formation: Confession and Guidance.

Key Scripture: One for each from Psalms

Supporting points to key point:

Corporate disciplines are about being in community, confessing our sins to one another, worshipping together, seeking Godly wisdom from those around us and celebrating as a body all that God is doing!

Confession: vulnerability and accountability in community

Confession involves admitting sins to God and others and is essential for spiritual healing and reconciliation. Foster highlights the importance of vulnerability and accountability within Christian communities, and the liberating power of God's forgiveness through confession.

Psalm 32:5

*⁵I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah*

James 5:16

¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working

Confession is explored as a crucial spiritual practice that fosters honesty, humility, and healing within the Christian life. Confession is not merely about admitting wrongdoing but is a pathway to deeper intimacy with God and genuine community with others. Here are the key points from the chapter on confession:

1. Understanding Confession: Confession is the act of acknowledging and agreeing with God about our sins and failures. It involves a heartfelt admission of wrongdoing, which leads to repentance and restoration.

Confession is not just a ritual or a religious obligation; it is a relational practice that deepens one's relationship with God and others.

2. Biblical Basis for Confession: The chapter emphasizes the biblical call to confession, referencing scriptures such as 1 John 1:9, which states that if we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us.

Confession is rooted in the character of God, who desires to forgive and restore those who turn to Him in humility.

3. The Importance of Confession for Spiritual Growth: Confession is vital for spiritual growth and maturity. It allows individuals to confront their sins, receive God's grace, and experience healing and transformation.

Confession clears the way for a more profound relationship with God, as it removes barriers created by unacknowledged sin and guilt.

4. Confession as an Act of Humility: Confession requires humility, as it involves admitting one's faults and shortcomings. Humility opens the door to God's grace and mercy.

True confession is not just a mechanical recitation of sins but a genuine expression of sorrow and a desire for reconciliation with God.

5. Confession in Community: Confession is communal, encouraging believers to confess their sins to one another (James 5:16). This practice fosters accountability, support, and healing within the Christian community.

Confession in community helps break the isolation that sin often creates, allowing for mutual encouragement and restoration.

6. The Role of Accountability: Confession and accountability go hand in hand. We should as believers seek out trusted friends or mentors with whom they can be open about their struggles and failures.

Having someone to confess to can provide support, encouragement, and prayer, helping individuals stay accountable in their spiritual journeys.

7. The Healing Power of Confession: Confession brings healing. Acknowledging sin and receiving forgiveness can lead to emotional and spiritual healing, lifting burdens of guilt and shame.

This healing is not just personal; it can also have a ripple effect in relationships, restoring broken connections and fostering reconciliation.

8. The Danger of Avoiding Confession: We have a tendency to avoid confession, as this can lead to spiritual stagnation and a hardened heart. Unconfessed sin can create barriers between individuals and God, leading to feelings of guilt and distance from Him.

He highlights the importance of being proactive in confession, rather than waiting until one feels overwhelmed by guilt.

9. Practicing Confession: Practical guidance for practicing confession. He encourages believers to create a regular rhythm of confession, whether in private prayer or within community.

He suggests setting aside time for reflection, examining one's heart and actions, and being honest with God about struggles and sins.

10. The Joy of Forgiveness: Confession leads to the experience of God's forgiveness, which Foster describes as a profound source of joy. Receiving forgiveness restores peace and allows individuals to move forward in their relationship with God.

This joy is rooted in the understanding that God's grace is greater than our sin, reminding believers that they are fully accepted and loved by Him.

11. Confession as a Form of Worship: Confession is an act of worship, aligning one's heart with God's truth. Acknowledging sin is part of honouring God and recognizing his holiness.

Through confession, believers express their dependence on God's grace and mercy, cultivating a spirit of reverence and gratitude.

12. Confession and Spiritual Warfare: Confession plays a role in spiritual warfare. When believers confess their sins, they disarm the enemy's attempts to use guilt and shame against them.

Confession helps to bring light to darkness, allowing God's truth to prevail in the believer's life.

Conclusion: Confession as an essential discipline that fosters healing, humility, and spiritual growth. It is a practice that deepens one's relationship with God and strengthens community ties. By embracing confession, believers experience the freedom of God's forgiveness, the joy of restored relationships, and the transformative power of grace. In this way, confession becomes a vital part of the journey toward becoming more like Christ.

Guidance: godly wisdom of community

Guidance is about seeking and discerning God's will within a community of believers. God often speaks through others, and the church community should be a place of mutual support, where believers help each other make decisions in line with God's purposes.

Psalm 25:4-5

*⁴Show me your ways, Lord,
teach me your paths.*

*⁵Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.*

Proverbs 11:14, 15:22, 19:20,

Guidance is explored as a vital aspect of the Christian journey, emphasizing the importance of seeking and discerning God's will in one's life. Guidance as a multifaceted process that involves prayer, scripture, community, and a listening heart. Here are the key points from the chapter on guidance:

1. Understanding Guidance: Guidance as the process of discerning God's will and direction for one's life. It involves seeking a deeper understanding of God's purpose and aligning one's life with it.

Guidance is not merely about making decisions but is rooted in the relationship between the believer and God.

2. The Role of the Holy Spirit: Crucial role of the Holy Spirit in providing guidance. The Spirit leads believers into truth, helping them discern God's will and direction in various situations.

We need to cultivate sensitivity to the Spirit's promptings, as this is essential for receiving guidance.

3. The Importance of Prayer: Prayer is a central aspect of seeking guidance. Foster stresses the necessity of regular, honest communication with God as a means of understanding his will.

He encourages believers to approach prayer with openness and a willingness to listen, rather than simply presenting requests.

4. The Role of Scripture: Scripture is important in the guidance process. The Bible serves as a foundational source of wisdom and truth, providing insights into God's character and his will for humanity.

Believers are encouraged to immerse themselves in scripture, allowing it to shape their understanding and decisions.

5. The Value of Community: Guidance is often best discerned in the context of community. There is importance of seeking counsel from trusted friends, mentors, and church leaders who can provide insight and support.

Community can offer diverse perspectives, helping individuals see their situations more clearly and discern God's will collectively.

6. Listening for God's Voice: Importance of listening as an active part of seeking guidance. This involves being attentive to God's voice through prayer, scripture, and the experiences of life.

Cultivate a posture of receptivity, being open to the ways God may speak through various means.

7. Discerning God's Will: Practical guidance on discerning God's will, including:

- **Seeking Peace:** A sense of peace can be a significant indicator of God's direction.
- **Evaluating Circumstances:** Observing the circumstances surrounding a decision can provide insight into God's guidance.
- **Reflecting on Inner Convictions:** Personal convictions and desires aligned with God's character can indicate his leading.

8. The Role of Silence and Solitude: Silence and solitude are essential for hearing God's voice clearly. Foster encourages believers to create space for quiet reflection and prayer, allowing God to speak without distractions.

These practices help cultivate an environment where individuals can attune themselves to God's guidance.

9. Recognizing the Importance of Wisdom: Role of wisdom in the guidance process. Believers are encouraged to seek wise counsel and to apply discernment in decision-making.

Wisdom is rooted in a relationship with God and is informed by scripture, experience, and community.

10. The Challenge of Guidance: Seeking guidance can be challenging and sometimes confusing. There may be times when the way forward seems unclear.

Remain patient and trust in God's timing, even when immediate clarity is lacking.

11. Acting on Guidance: Once guidance is discerned, Foster emphasizes the importance of taking action. Faithful obedience to God's leading is a crucial aspect of the guidance process. He encourages believers to step out in faith, even if the path ahead is uncertain.

12. The Assurance of God's Presence: God is present in the guidance process. They are not alone in seeking His will, and He promises to guide those who earnestly seek Him.

This assurance fosters confidence and trust in God's faithful leading.

Conclusion: Guidance is a dynamic and relational discipline that involves prayer, scripture, community, and a listening heart. By seeking God's will and being attentive to his leading, believers can navigate life's decisions with confidence and clarity. The process of guidance fosters spiritual growth, deepens one's relationship with God, and aligns the believer's life with his purposes.