

WORKBOOK

# Spiritual Formation Workbook

*A 12-week guided workbook for deepening prayer, Scripture engagement, Sabbath practice, and community as the four foundations of Christian spiritual formation*

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*Equipping pastors and leaders to serve with excellence, integrity, and lasting Kingdom impact.*



# The Theological Foundation: Means of Grace, Not Means of Merit

Spiritual formation is not what happens when you try harder. It is what happens when you create the conditions in which the Holy Spirit can do what only the Holy Spirit can do. The spiritual disciplines -- prayer, Scripture, Sabbath, community, fasting, simplicity, service -- are not techniques for earning God's favor. They are habits of receptivity: ways of placing yourself repeatedly in the presence of the One who transforms, and trusting him to do the transforming. This 12-week workbook takes you through four foundational disciplines, three weeks at a time, with daily exercises, weekly reflection, and specific practice challenges that move the disciplines from theory to embodied habit.

## The Theological Foundation: Means of Grace, Not Means of Merit

The greatest danger in any discussion of spiritual disciplines is the slide from means of grace to means of merit -- from "these are ways I open myself to receive what God gives" to "these are ways I earn what God gives." The Reformation's battle against works-righteousness in salvation has an exact parallel in spiritual formation: the disciplines do not produce holiness; they create the conditions in which holiness, which is always a gift, can be received and embodied. Dallas Willard's metaphor is illuminating: the spiritual disciplines are to spiritual formation what physical training is to athletic performance. An athlete does not strain every muscle during competition in order to succeed -- he succeeds in competition because he has trained his body to respond automatically, fluently, and powerfully. The spiritual disciplines train the soul to respond to God's grace with increasing fluency and spontaneity.

### Weeks 1-3: The Prayer Foundation

Week 1 introduces the theology of prayer as participation in the divine life rather than a technique for getting what you want. The daily exercises move you through the four classic movements of prayer -- adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication (ACTS) -- with specific biblical texts for each. Week 2 introduces contemplative prayer: the practice of lectio divina (sacred reading), the examen (the Ignatian practice of reviewing the day in God's presence), and centering prayer (the practice of resting in divine presence without an agenda). Week 3 introduces intercessory prayer: praying specifically and consistently for others, with frameworks for a personal prayer list and a daily intercession practice. Weeks 4-6: Scripture Engagement. Moving from reading the Bible to encountering it -- from information extraction to formative encounter. Week 4: Bible reading as spiritual practice (not study). Week 5: Meditation and memorization. Week 6: Applying Scripture to specific life situations. Weeks 7-9: Sabbath and Rest. The spirituality of stopping -- learning to cease, rest, embrace, and feast (Heschel's four Sabbath movements). Week 10-12: Community as Formation. The communal disciplines -- confession, worship, accountability, service. The argument that genuine spiritual formation cannot happen in isolation.

Each week includes: a theological introduction (why this discipline matters and how it works); three daily exercises (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) that are 20-30 minutes each; a weekly reflection prompt; a specific 7-day practice challenge; and space for journaling observations and questions. The workbook is designed for either individual use or small group engagement, with discussion questions at the end of each three-week section.

### Reflection and Discussion Questions

1. What is the most personally significant insight from this resource for your specific ministry context right now?

(continued)

2. Where is the greatest gap between the principles here and your current practice? What is one specific step to begin closing that gap?
3. Who in your leadership community needs to engage with this material? How will you bring them into the conversation?
4. What accountability structure will you put in place to ensure the commitments you are making here are actually kept?

*The work described in this resource is not the extraordinary work of exceptionally gifted ministers. It is the ordinary, daily, faithful work of people who have decided to take their calling seriously -- to prepare, to pray, to show up, and to trust God with what only he can do. Do the ordinary things with extraordinary faithfulness. That is the whole of it.*

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