

Spiritual Disciplines & Practices

- As I use the terms, *Disciplines* are universal spiritual capacities, attitudes, “habits of the heart.” *Practices* are exercises, routines, and training methods that help us grow, expand, and deepen the disciplines or habits of the heart. Practices change and evolve; disciplines grow and deepen.
- *Prayer*—both personal and communal (especially for those who are religious)—is a multifaceted and highly varied practice that touches on and nurtures *all* the disciplines. Both the form and focus of prayer can be attuned to each discipline. Powerful options: centering prayer and *lectio divina*.
- Over time, the fruit of a disciplined, practiced spirituality is a *contemplative life*. I therefore do not include contemplation as a separate discipline of practice.

Discipline	Practices
Compassion	Listening; forgiveness; healing of memories
Hospitality	Openness to “the other”; welcome the stranger; create a welcoming attitude and space; live <i>namaste</i>
Community/companions	Tend family as core community; communal worship (for Christians, Eucharist at the center); nurture spiritual friendships; actively participate in local, national and global communities; seek solidarity and unity with all
Gratitude/Joy/Hope	Develop posture that “all is grace”; nurture a hopeful heart; attend to feelings of hopelessness; “clear a decent shelter for your sorrow” and grief (Hillesum) and joyful hope will follow
Attention/presence	Live “the sacrament of the present moment”; live the now and resist pull to past and future; “practice the presence of God” (Br. Lawrence) and “the Little Way” (Thérèse of Lisieux)
Service/justice	Develop generosity of spirit and capacity to live/give unconditionally; seek gifts <i>from</i> those served
Simplicity	Resist consumerism and materialism; readily share and avoid possessiveness; cleanse life of distraction; practice self-awareness in terms of personal and family finances
Discernment	Hone the skill of “reading the Spirit”; pursue life-affirming core values and attitudes. Engage community when needed—e.g., through “clearness committee” (Quaker practice)
Study/Inquiry	Nurture insatiable curiosity and “learn to live the questions” (Rilke); resist easy answers and certitude; study prayerfully and embrace truth wherever it is found
Honor the body	Develop a healthy lifestyle; respect and care for body through diet (including fasting) and exercise; respect self and others physically and sexually; accept and learn from physical limitations and inevitable death
Solitude	Develop capacity for and comfort with silence; avoid clinging and codependency; monitor use of media and technology
Wonder & awe	Embrace and celebrate Mystery at the heart of all that is; approach nature reverentially

Source: Tom Zanzig © 2010