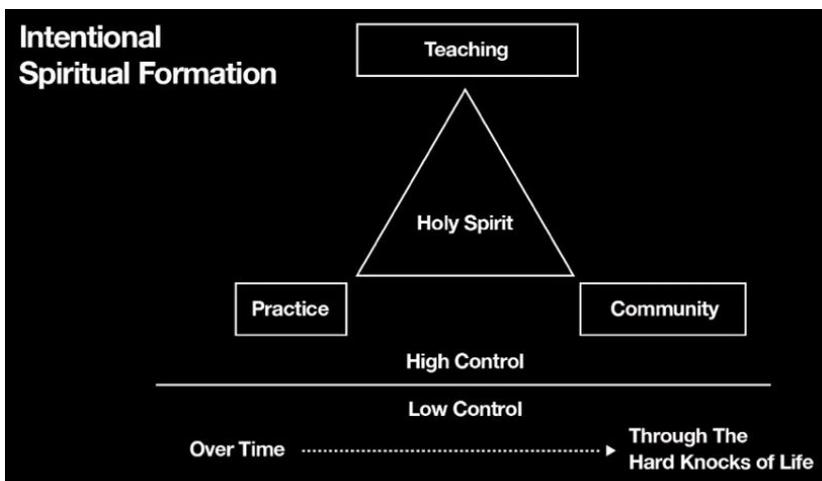


Here is Mike’s talk from Sunday about how we can practice living out our faith, and specifically by praying for Ukraine <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibKb7USJ6o4&t=4688s>

Series recap questions

- To be an apprentice of Jesus is to order your life around 3 goals, can anyone remember what they are?
 - o Be with Jesus
 - o Become like Jesus
 - o Do what he did
- We do this through intentional spiritual formation, can anyone remember any of the aspects?
 - o Teaching
 - o Practice
 - o Community
 - o Holy spirit at the centre



Question

- Before we unpack practice, did anything stick out from Mike’s talk on Sunday about the importance of practice, or do you have your own reasons?
- Spend some time practicing our faith by praying for Ukraine and Russia.

Why is practice important?

The spiritual disciplines are the way to “life to the full,” they are how we posture our mind and body to abide in the vine and access the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Yet so many people today misunderstand the central role of these practices in discipleship. A core teaching in our series.

The Need for Self-Discipline

1 Cor 9:24-27 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. ²⁶ Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Paul regularly uses the metaphor of athletic discipline, which in this passage the readers in Corinth would have been very familiar with, due to the Isthmian games – a local festival of athletic competition. Following Jesus is like being an athlete. It involves discipline. This relates to the spiritual disciplines.

Questions

- What are your initial thoughts when you hear the words self-discipline?
- This metaphor may excite you if you like sport, but possibly not if you are not particularly sporty. Do you like or dislike this athletic metaphor for the Christian faith, and why?
- Knowing that it is not a competition against one another (like in sport), but a battle in the spiritual realm (between the flesh and the spirit) in which we fight *together*, whether you like this metaphor or not, what encouragements or challenges can you take away from this passage?

Spiritual disciplines (the practices of Jesus)

Definition: practises based on the lifestyle of Jesus that create a time and space for us to access the power and presence of the holy spirit, and in doing so be transformed from the inside out

There is no official list but here are some common ones

- Silence and solitude, prayer, fasting, Bible (reading, meditating, memorizing, studying), community, Sabbath, Sunday gathering, communion, worship by singing, teaching, serving, simple living, celebration, grieving (well), confession, secrecy (serving or doing anything for/with Jesus but not in public), gratitude.

The spiritual disciplines are how we partner with God to change. Dallas Willard said “grace isn’t opposed to effort, but earning”.

- A common misconception is that being a Christian doesn’t take effort. It does. Not effort to earn salvation, but effort to practice the way of Jesus in this culture we live in.

Reflective questions

- Take some time to look at the following 6 thoughts on using the spiritual disciplines well and reflect on your personality type, and what season you are currently in to help you identify ways in which spending time with God can be more freeing and enjoyable than burdensome.
- Pray together about any areas you may want to practice

Six thoughts on how to use the spiritual disciplines well

1. Smart training takes a balanced approach (use all 4 of these in a balanced way)
 - a. Alone (quiet time, Bible, prayer, meditation etc)
 - b. Abstinence (fasting food or other things like TV, phone etc)
 - c. Community (worship, Bible reading/ teaching, prayer group, activities etc)
 - d. Engagement
2. Smart training takes into account your personality.
 - a. People need different things
 - i. introverts need more time alone, but still need some community as well.
 - ii. Extroverts need loads of time with people and community, yet still need time alone sometimes as well
 - b. 9 Sacred pathways
 - i. Naturalists: loving God through being in His beautiful creation.
 - ii. Sensates: worship God with the senses.
 - iii. Traditionalists: rituals, symbols, sacraments, and sacrifice, tithing, structure, church attendance.
 - iv. Ascetics: loving God in solitude and simplicity. Live a fundamentally internal existence.
 - v. Activists: loving God through confrontation. Standing against evil and calling to repentance.
 - vi. Caregivers: loving God by loving others.
 - vii. Enthusiasts: loving God with mystery and celebration.
 - viii. Contemplatives: loving God through contemplative adoration.
 - ix. Intellectuals: loving God with the mind e.g. studying God's Word
3. Smart training takes into consideration season of life
 - a. You could be single or married, have kids or not, be busy in work, you could be in University, everyone is at different ages and stages.
4. Smart training takes into account the need of the hour
 - a. If you struggle the sin of commission, try a discipline of abstinence (e.g. with sexual sin for example, try fasting)
 - b. If you struggle with the sin of omission, try to engage more (e.g. if you struggle with the sin of lukewarmness, try the discipline of engagement, go do something radical to break through the apathy)
5. Smart training isn't afraid to do the hard work
6. Smart training takes into account the need for repetition
 - a. There is no transformation without reputation
 - b. Discipleship is a long and slow journey of transformation
 - c. It takes patience!
 - d. You will change, but it will be harder than you think and will take longer than you think
 - e. Joy is found more in the ordinary than the extraordinary. Yes, sometimes we are blown away by the extraordinary but those are few and far between