



LEADING WELL

LEADING FROM A HEALTHY PLACE

SESSION 2
FEBRUARY 2024



LEADING FROM A PLACE OF SPIRITUAL HEALTH

The Value of an MOT

'I am the vine, you are the branches if you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit, apart from me you can do nothing.'

John 15:5

1. Particular Challenges

Matthew 6:5-13

- Person.

- Place.

- Pattern.





EXERCISE

CHALLENGE	HOW ARE YOU DOING Where 1 = not at all well and 5 = really well				
How to worship when leading worship.	1	2	3	4	5
How to stay fresh and engaged when running multiple services on one day and feeling physically and spiritually drained.	1	2	3	4	5
Handling expectations (our own and others) that prayer feels unproductive.	1	2	3	4	5
Reality that we are very exposed in the spiritual realm as leaders. There is a battle on.	1	2	3	4	5
Temptation to always be looking for things for the next talk/sermon when we read the Bible in our personal devotions.	1	2	3	4	5
How to intercede for the congregations/parishes in a way that doesn't come to dominate our personal prayer life, or conversely get left out.	1	2	3	4	5
Handling the gap between who we are in the hidden space and who people need us to be/want us to be in the public space (for example, leading worship when you've had a row with your spouse or offering hope to someone when struggling with depression).	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of assessment of our hidden spiritual life means that which isn't assessed easily gets left behind for the things that are assessed/seen.	1	2	3	4	5
The sheer demands of the job leaving us tired and overburdened, making prayer hard.	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5

Choose a challenge within your breakout group and work on it together, exploring what you have found helpful. If you have time move on to a second challenge and do the same. Be specific and record your insights to feedback to the wider group.

2. Patterns of Prayer

Guidelines from Busy Christian Living by Emma Ineson:

- Sustainable: for this season.
- Practical: in the everyday.
- Life-giving: relevant to all of your life.
- Releasing: not guilt-inducing.
- Authentic: to who you are.

Guidelines

AVOID THINKING WE PROGRESS BEYOND THE BASICS

AVOID WEARING SOMEONE ELSE'S CLOTHES

LEAN INTO RHYTHMS THAT WORK FOR YOU

- Daily.
- Weekly.
- Monthly.
- Termly.
- Annually.
- Seven yearly.

'Ministry for God can be the greatest barrier to intimacy with God.'

Barry Hawes



Finding Your Sacred Pathway

(Based on Sacred Pathways by Gary Thomas)

Put a 'o' beside the two or three statements that most sound like you. Put an 'x' beside the two or three statements that sound least like you.

1. I feel closest to God when I'm surrounded by what he's made – the mountains, forests, water, etc.
2. I feel closest to God when I'm in a church that allows my senses to come alive – when I can see, smell, hear, and almost taste his majesty.
3. I feel closest to God when I'm participating in a familiar form of worship that has memories dating back to my childhood. Rituals and traditions move me more than anything else.
4. I feel closest to God when I am alone and there is nothing to distract me from focusing on his presence.
5. I feel closest to God when I'm co-operating with him in standing up for his justice or undertaking a challenge on behalf of others – writing letters to government, picketing, learning about current issues from a biblical viewpoint.
6. I am closest to God when I see him and serve him in the needy, the poor, the sick and the imprisoned.
7. I feel closest to God when my heart is sent soaring and I feel like I want to burst, worship God all day long and declare his name.
8. When I think of God, I think of love, friendship and adoration more than anything else.
9. I feel closest to God when I learn something new about him that I didn't understand before. I love being taught and learning. My mind needs to be stimulated. It's very important to me that I know exactly what I believe.

For a more comprehensive questionnaire and further resources go to www.soulshpherd.org/sacred-pathways-survey.

Overview

'What is a "sacred pathway"? Put very simply, it describes the way we relate to God, how we draw near to him.'

Gary Thomas

1. CREATION

Love connecting with God in the great outdoors and God's great cathedral. From the Garden of Eden to Jesus speaking on the seashore, the Bible provides innumerable examples of God speaking through the backdrop of nature.

- **Try it** Connect with God on location outside – a park, a city centre, the mountains, etc. Walk, sit, look, rest, etc.
- **Cautions** Be careful of escapism, lack of objective truth or replacement of God's word through idolising nature.

2. SENSORS

Love connecting with God through their sense: sounds – from organs, bells, choirs, classical music, formal language; smell – incense, candles, wine, etc.; touch – nails; sight – altar, art, colors, architecture, stained glass windows; taste – communion bread, etc. See examples in Revelation or Ezekiel.

- **Try it** Visit and explore a cathedral, light a candle or put on Handel's Messiah during your quiet time, Arrow cross rocks.
- **Cautions** Be careful that senses don't deceive, or fall into trap of idolatry.

3. TRADITIONALISTS

Love connecting with God through ritual, symbols, and sacraments. Keep a disciplined life of faith with high structure and repetition. Many OT and NT observances and Christian symbols (cross, fish, dove, bread, wine).

- **Try it** Visit a traditional worship service – experience and learn about the 'why' behind the liturgy, try a Daily Office format for your devotional life. (see www.emotionallyhealthy.org)
- **Cautions** Be careful not to deify tradition, miss loving people or become judging.

4. ASECTICS

Love connecting with God through solitude, deep reflection and extended prayer.

- **Try it** Try a silent retreat, begin a journal, etc.
- **Cautions** Be careful of overemphasizing personal piety/inwardness over action, retreat to solitude when disappointed, seeking to gain God's favour.

'I want to faithfully serve God for fifty or sixty or seventy years, which means I need to consider how I can be spiritually replenished.'

Gary Thomas

5. ACTIVISTS

Justice and action are key words in how you connect with God. See Moses, Nehemiah.

- **Try it** Learn about an issue and take a step of action (write a letter, volunteer, give financially, educate others, etc.).
- **Cautions** Too goal focused, lack of reflection time, lack of inner development and care.

6. SERVING

Love connecting with God through acts of service and care.

- **Try it** Volunteer for a half day at a hospice, soup kitchen, shelter, hospital, nursing home, etc.
- **Cautions** Judging others, neglecting those closest, seeking to earn God's love.

7. ENTHUSIASTS

Mystery and celebration – dreams, expectancy, prayer, joyful celebration. Deep desire to experience, feel, be moved.

- **Try it** Experiment with a new body posture at a worship service, attend a community worship event, etc.
- **Cautions** Remember that celebration requires reverence; experience for experiences' sake, independence, good feelings do not necessarily equate to good worship.

8. CONTEMPLATIVES

Abba Father, desire to gaze into God's face, deep adoration, resting in God's presence, active/engaged prayer, etc.

- **Try it** Begin a prayer journal, set aside time for quiet and prayer, etc.
- **Cautions** Separation from others, forgetting virtue, experience addiction.

9. INTELLECTUALS

You connect through learning, thinking, problem solving. You enjoy theology, history, creeds, apologetics, self-study through tapes/books.

- **Try it** Read or listen to one of the great Christian thinkers of past or present, seek to learn at a deeper level on a topic/issue of interest.
- **Cautions** Knowledge for sake of knowledge, danger of head dominating heart, pride, inaction, major in minors.

'Just as a married couple will express their love for each other differently in their fifties than they did in their twenties, so our love relationship with God undergoes changes as we mature and walk through life.'

Gary Thomas

For Reflection

Most people have two or three that are their preferences. Over time, you can learn to embrace other pathways that might not be your natural ones, which can bring added dimensions to the way we relate to God.



Which are your preferred pathways?

What are the things you personally need to be careful about?

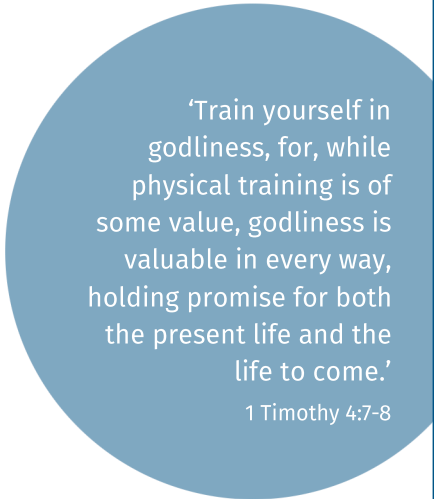
Which are the ones you would most like to try out?

3. Spiritual Disciplines

'Discipline: any activity I can do by direct effort that will help me to do what I cannot now do by direct effort.'

'Spiritual discipline: any activity that can help me gain power to live as Jesus taught and modelled it.'

John Ortberg



'Train yourself in godliness, for, while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.'

1 Timothy 4:7-8

TRUSTING TOTALLY

TRAINING WISELY

'The only measure that matters is proximity to Jesus.'

Michel Ramsey



EXERCISE

A Spiritual Discipline MOT

Please reflect on your engagement with the following spiritual disciplines and place a circle around the number that most closely reflects your level of engagement with the practice. For an explanation of each discipline see the following pages.

When doing this exercise be ruthlessly honest with yourself. Most leaders struggle with a regular pattern of spiritual disciplines, so if you find yourself in that place you are not unusual.

Don't reflect on what has been in the past, but on what is in the present i.e. in the last three months.

THE DISCIPLINES OF ABSTINENCE

	Not a feature of my spiritual life at all					A regular part of my spiritual life				
Solitude	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Silence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Fasting (food)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Fasting (alcohol)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Fasting (screens/social media)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Frugality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Chastity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Secrecy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sacrifice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

THE DISCIPLINES OF ENGAGEMENT

	Not a feature of my spiritual life at all					A regular part of my spiritual life				
Daily prayer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Daily Bible reading	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Study	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Worship	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Celebration	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Fellowship	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Confession	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Submission	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

For Further Reflection

Which disciplines have you engaged with in the past but no longer do?

Which disciplines do you most struggle with and why?

Which one do you sense God may be calling you to embrace at this time?

Introduction

In *The Life You've Always Wanted*, John Ortberg notes that spiritual disciplines are:

'Simply a means of appropriating or growing toward the life that God graciously offers...' And he defines them thus: 'Discipline: any activity I can do by direct effort that will help me to do what I cannot now do by direct effort. Spiritual discipline: any activity that can help me gain power to live as Jesus taught and modelled it.'

What does Spiritual Discipline do For Us?

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Spiritual discipline helps us effectively 'run the race' and focus our spiritual goals. The idea of running a long-distance race requires us both to train and to fix our eyes on the end. Disciplines are a form of training that help us to receive all that God has for us in order to continue the race. They also keep our focus on the ultimate goal – being like Jesus and being with Jesus.

1 Timothy 4:7-10 Disciplines keep us spiritually fit. Spiritual health, 'godliness', is more important than physical health. Service is one way to keep us spiritually fit.

Hebrews 12:1-4 Spiritual discipline strips away the non-essentials: our Christian life requires us to give up whatever endangers our relationship with God, to run patiently and to struggle against sin in the power of the Holy Spirit. To live effectively we must keep our eyes on Jesus.

In *Celebration of Discipline* Richard Foster takes a list of 12 disciplines and divides them into three groups: inward (meditation, prayer, fasting and study); outward (simplicity, solitude, submission and service); corporate (confession, worship, guidance and celebration). The following definitions are largely taken from *The Spirit of the Disciplines* by Dallas Willard, and explains them a little further.

Disciplines of Abstinence

1 Peter 2:11 'Abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.' In the disciplines of abstinence we abstain to some degree and for some time from the satisfaction of what we generally regard as normal and legitimate desires... basic drives and motivations such as those for food, sleep, bodily activity, companionship, curiosity and sex. Our desires for convenience, comfort, material security, reputation or fame, and variety are also considered. Abstinence does not imply that there is anything essentially wrong with these desires as such.

SOLITUDE

Choosing deliberately to abstain from interaction with other human beings, denying ourselves companionship and all that comes from our constant interaction with others – it is not solitude in order to do, but in order to come face-to-face with ourselves and our relationship with God. That can make it scary as many of us immunise ourselves

against this through busyness and interaction. In our hyper-connected world solitude also means disconnecting from all things electronic.

FASTING

Abstaining in some significant way from food, and possibly from drink as well, teaches us a lot about ourselves very quickly. There are many ways to fast: from a bread-and-water, Daniel-style fast (Daniel 1:12) to forgoing food and/or drink completely (Matthew 4). Fasting confirms our utter dependence on God by finding in him a source of sustenance beyond food. We fast in order to feast on God – feasting on him and on doing his will.

FRUGALITY

This involves abstaining from using money or goods at our disposal in ways that merely gratify our desires or hunger for status, glamour or luxury. It means that we stay in the bounds of what general good judgement would designate as necessary for the kind of life to which God has led us. In this context simplicity (the arrangement of life around a few consistent purposes, explicitly excluding what is not necessary to human well-being) can be seen as an extension of frugality.

CHASTITY

Purposefully choosing to turn away from dwelling on or engaging in the sexual dimension of our relationships with others – even husbands and wives... in other words an abstaining from sex and from indulging in sexual feelings and thoughts, and therefore learning how not to be governed by them. The main effect we are looking for through the practice of chastity is being able to deal with, in a wholesome way, sexual acts, feelings, thoughts and attitudes within our lives as a whole.

SECRECY

Abstaining from causing our good deeds and qualities to be known – even to the extent of taking steps to prevent them being known, if that can be achieved without deception. Rightly practised, this enables us to place our public relations department entirely in the hands of God – we allow him to decide where our deeds will be known and when our light will be noticed (Philippians 2:3).

SACRIFICE

This discipline is about a willingness to sacrifice things that we otherwise would see as necessary for living well. It isn't about giving up things that we can easily do without, but giving up things that incur some sort of 'cost' to us. We may abstain from getting a possession we feel is necessary to meet our preferred needs, or give up something we already have. What constitutes a 'need' will differ from person to person.

Disciplines of Engagement

These are a balance to abstinence. Abstinence counteracts tendencies to sins of commission. Engagement counteracts tendencies to sins of omission.

STUDY

Engaging with the written and spoken word of God – not just for the sake of knowledge, but in order to meditate on it, learn from it and apply it so that it becomes part of the everyday fabric of our lives. Our prayer as we do this should be that God will speak to us through his living word. This will involve a regular allocation of time, plus time spent reading the Bible as a whole. It also means making an effort to sit under biblical teaching, sharing with others and reading biographies of other disciples.

WORSHIP

In worship we engage ourselves with, dwell on and express the greatness, beauty and goodness of God – through thought and the use of words, music, some ritual and symbols. We should do this alone and with other believers. In worship we should take time to come to the Father through the Son – in other words to focus on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and all that means to us. We should expect worship to deepen our relationship with God as his Holy Spirit fills us and draws us close.

CELEBRATION

This is one of the most important disciplines of engagement, yet one of the most misunderstood and overlooked. It is the completion of worship, for it dwells on the greatness of God as shown in his goodness to us. We engage in celebration when we enjoy ourselves, our lives, our world, in conjunction with our faith and confidence in God's greatness. We concentrate on our life and world as God's work and as God's gift to us. Celebration can include feasting with God's people, music, singing and dance, and the relating of stories of God's action for us and his people.

SERVICE

In service we engage our goods and strengths in the active promotion of the good of others and the causes of God in our world. We need to remember, though, that not every act that MAY be done as a discipline NEED be done as a discipline, but in the sense of spiritual discipline I may choose to serve another to train myself away from arrogance, possessiveness, envy, resentment or covetousness. Service is a way to be freed from bondage to other people... we are primarily serving God (Colossians 3:22-24). For leaders, the discipline of service can be hard – to live as a servant whilst fulfilling socially important roles is one of the greatest challenges any disciple faces.

PRAYER

Prayer is conversing, communicating with God. When we pray we talk to God – aloud or in our own thoughts. By its very nature prayer almost always involves other disciplines and spiritual activities – especially worship, study,

meditation and sometimes solitude and fasting. Of course prayer should not be undertaken purely as a discipline – yet it can be one. As a discipline it has its greatest force in strengthening the spiritual life as we learn to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17 and Philippians 4:6). We can train ourselves to invoke God's presence in every act we perform through practising the discipline of prayer in all circumstances.

FELLOWSHIP

In fellowship we engage in common activities of worship, study and prayer, celebration and service, with other disciples. This can be done in large gatherings or small groups, but the members of the body must be in contact if they are to sustain and be sustained by each other – do not neglect to meet together. There is a reciprocal nature to life in the body and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given through the body as a whole to be administered to and for each other.

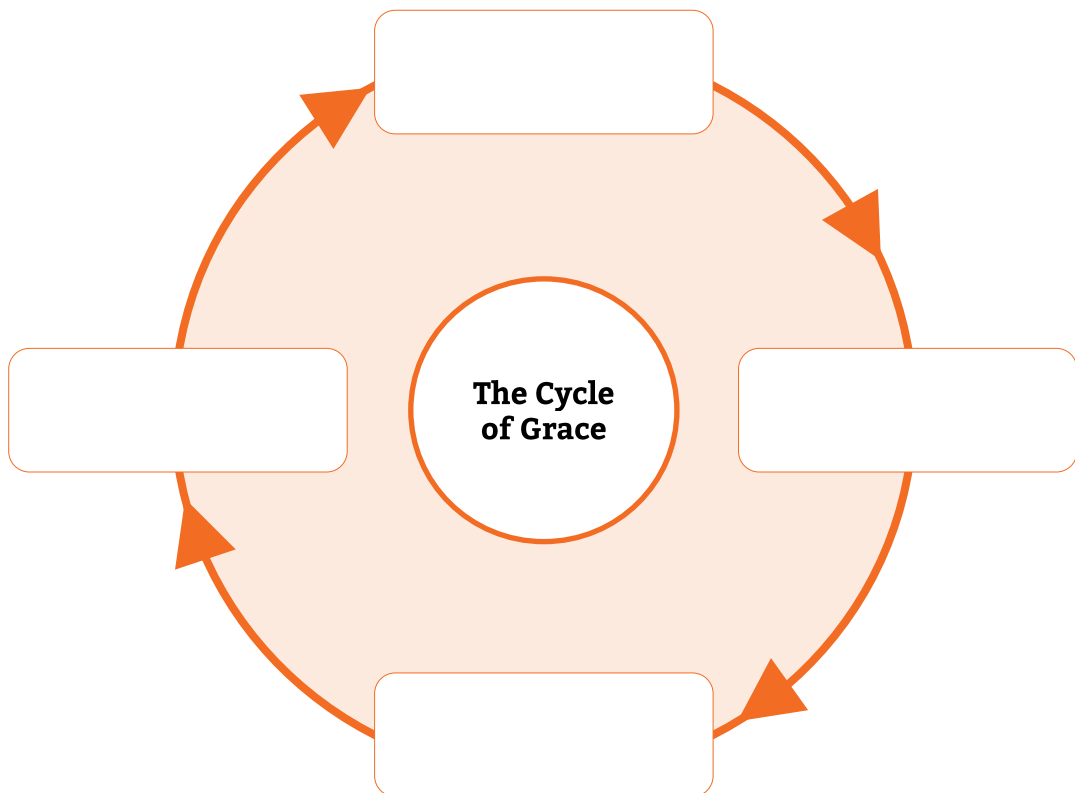
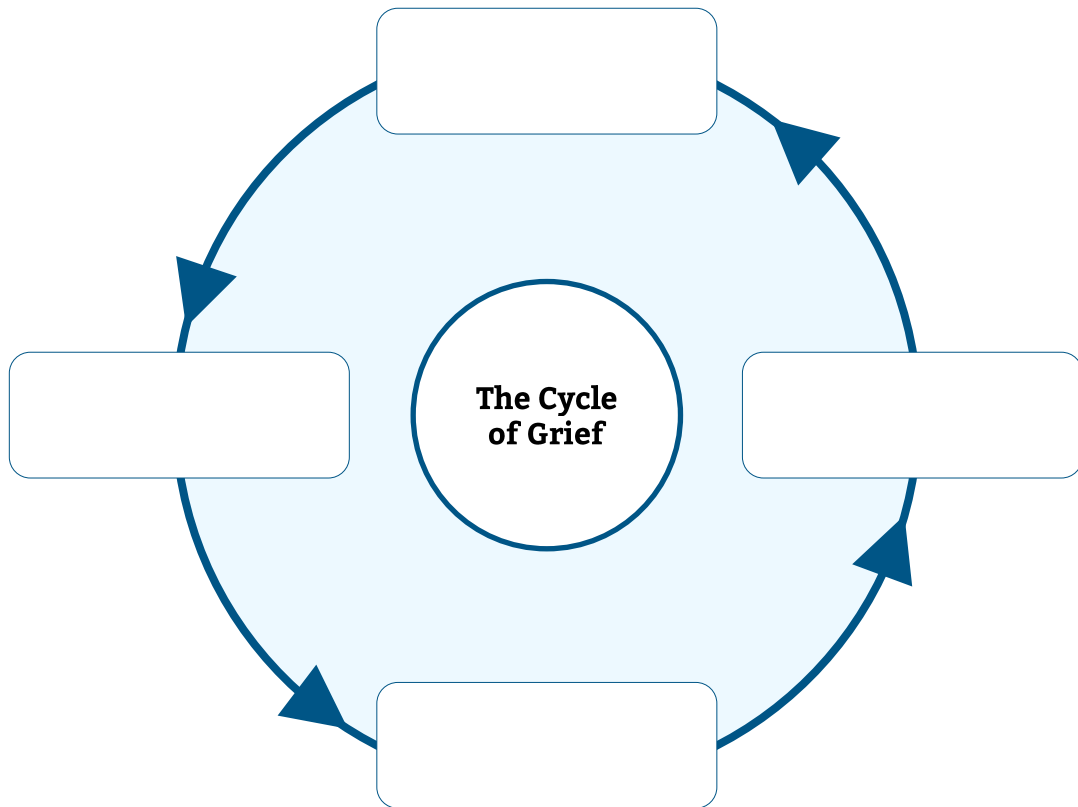
CONFESSION

Confession is a discipline that functions within fellowship. In it we let trusted others know our deepest weaknesses and failures. This will nourish our faith in God's provision for our needs through his people, our sense of being loved, and our humanity before our brothers and sisters. We let some friends know who we really are, not holding back anything important, but ideally allowing complete transparency. We lay down the burden of pretending and hiding, which normally takes up such a dreadful amount of human energy. Confession brings healing and forgiveness – but confession also helps us to avoid sin, because persisting in sin when living in transparent relationships is unsupportable unless hidden. Restitution often follows.

Conclusion

Using these disciplines will deepen our relationship with God and help us to grow in Christ-likeness. Different ones will be appropriate at different times and should be practised in addition to our daily walk with God – they are tools for training us to last the course. The temptation in our driven society will be to get legalistic about their practice and burdened with guilt when we fail – that is not the way that God operates. That is why mentoring and accountability relationships are so good for us.

LEADING FROM A PLACE OF ACCEPTANCE





EXERCISE

What strikes you about these cycles?

How might leaders behave if their lives are driven by (a) the cycle of grief or (b) the cycle of grace?

Which element do you find most challenging in your walk with God?

RESOURCES

- Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership, Ruth Haley Barton (IVP)
- Sacred Pathways, Gary Thomas (Zondervan)
- The Way of the Heart, Henri Nouwen (Harper Collins)
- The Spirit of Disciplines, Dallas Willard (Harper)
- Soul Keeping, John Ortberg (Zondervan)