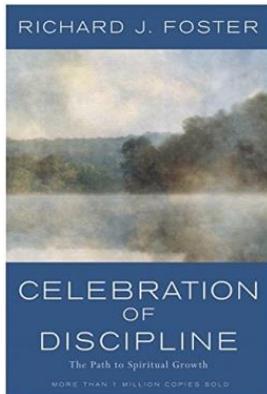


## Celebration of Discipline – Lent 2023



Back in 1980, Richard Foster wrote 'Celebration of Discipline, the path to spiritual growth'. In it he explores twelve different disciplines that have been part of the Christian life over the centuries: four inward disciplines, four outward and four communal ones. As part of our Lent journey this year we are going to explore six of them; meditation and study; service and simplicity; confession and celebration. The intention is to follow up with the other six in Lent 2024. Lent provides a great opportunity to spend some time in self-examination; not so we become too introspective or down-hearted about our faith but to explore how we might move closer to God.

This booklet gives you some daily readings that you could use this Lent, with some questions to study and explore the subjects further for yourself. The questions are adapted from the ones in Richard Foster's book and are general questions - not specifically based on any of the Bible passages - but to get you thinking on the particular discipline all week! Also, be encouraged that our Motto Verse talks about the Spirit 'filling us with power, love and self-control' (also translated self-discipline) so we can undertake this time of Lenten study not in our strength but in the power of the Spirit.

Since the topics are being preached across THiS Team (but in a different order in each church), this guide is based on the order for St Matthew's so that, as far as possible, the readings link to the closest Sunday's preaching.

### **Introduction from Wednesday 22 Feb**

**Day 1 Psalm 42**

**Day 2 Psalm 51**

**Day 3 Romans 7:13-25**

**Day 4 Philippians 3:1-16**

1. Is superficiality the 'curse of our age' Why, why not?
2. What do you think are the main purposes of practising the spiritual disciplines?
3. In what ways might incorporating them into your day-to-day life help develop your faith?
4. What issues might practically or theoretically get in the way for you of engaging in the practice of these disciplines?

## **Outward Disciplines (preaching theme on Sunday 5 March)**

### **Simplicity – from Sunday 26 Feb**

**Day 1 Matthew 6:19-24**

**Day 2 Matthew 6:25-34**

**Day 3 Genesis 15**

**Day 4 Leviticus 25: 8-12**

**Day 5 Matthew 5:33-37**

**Day 6 Amos 5:11-15**

**Day 7 Luke 12: 13-24**

1. Foster describes simplicity as having both inward and outward aspects . Why do you think both are essential?
2. Can you think what the concept of the year of Jubilee (lev 25:8-12) might look like in our current society?
3. What are the biggest challenges to practising simplicity in your life?
4. Think of one thing you could do this week to simplify your life and do it?

### **Service – from Sunday 5 March**

**Day 1 Matthew 20:20-28**

**Day 2 John 3:1-17**

**Day 3 1 Corinthians 9:19**

**Day 4 Colossians 3:23-25**

**Day 5 Romans 12: 9-13**

**Day 6 Matthew 25:31-39**

**Day 7 Luke 10:29-37**

1. If the towel is seen as a sign of service in Jesus' life , in what ways can that be manifested in this century?
2. In what way does service work humility into our lives?
3. When should we say no to the demands on our time and attention?
4. Find one way this week to serve someone. Pray that God would bring someone to you whom you can serve.

## **Corporate Disciplines (preaching theme on Sunday 12 March)**

### **Confession – from Sunday 12 March**

**Day 1 Isaiah 59:1-9**

**Day 2 Jeremiah 31:34 Matt 26:28**

**Day 3 1 John 1:5-10**

**Day 4 1 Timothy 2:5 and 1 John 2:1**

**Day 5 Luke 15:11-24**

**Day 6 Matt 16:19 and 18:18**

**Day 7 James 5:13-16**

1. In your own words can you explain the theology which underpins the discipline of confession (i.e. what is God doing and what are we doing)?
2. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of a 'formal' confession?
3. What do we need to do to ensure that our confession is based in a proper recognition of our need for forgiveness
4. Spend some time with God this week asking him to show you what needs to be confessed

### **Celebration – from Sunday 19 March**

**Day 1 Exodus 15:1-2 and 20-21**

**Day 2 2 Samuel 6:12-19**

**Day 3 Psalm 103**

**Day 4 Psalm 150**

**Day 5 John 12:12-19**

**Day 6 Acts 3:1-10**

**Day 7 Revelation 19:1-8**

1. Why do you think laughter with friends does us so much good?
2. Do you enjoy God? Or is this a difficult concept to apply?
3. How do we praise God in all things ? and how does that differ from praising God for all things?
4. Why do people find celebration so difficult?

### **Inward Disciplines (preaching theme on Sunday 26 March)**

#### **Meditation – from Sunday 26 March**

**Day 1 Exodus 24:15-18**

**Day 2 Exodus 33:11**

**Day 3 Exodus 20:18-19**

**Day 4 Psalm 1:1-3**

**Day 5 1 Kings 19:9-18**

**Day 6 Acts 10:9-20**

**Day 7 2 Corinthians 12:1-4**

1. What is your first reaction to the idea of meditation, what experience do you have in this area?
2. What are the things that make your life crowded, how do you hear God in the midst of the noise and clutter? How might meditation help?
3. Foster describes meditation on scripture, recollection of the day before God, meditation on the creation and creator God and meditation on daily events before God as varying ways of enriching the experience. Which seem easiest for you and why? How can you develop the other ways as well?
4. Try sitting with palms up and palms down: palms down to hand things over to God, palms up to receive from God. What do you notice?

## Study– from Sunday 2 April

Day 1 Proverbs 1:1-9	Day 5 James 1:19-25
Day 2 2 Timothy 3:16-17	Day 6 Acts 19:8-10
Day 3 Philippians 4:8-9	Day 7 Proverbs 24:30-34
Day 4 Luke 10:38-42	

1. Foster describes, repetition, concentration, comprehension and reflection as steps into study. Which of these do you find easiest and in what ways will all help your development in faith?
2. In what ways does study more fully bring about the purpose of the spiritual disciplines, which is the transformation of the individual?
3. Outside of the bible which book has had significant impact on your life and why?
4. How and why does study bring joy? Is that your experience?

## Concluding Questions

As we end this period of Lent and the exploration of these spiritual disciplines, what changes do you feel called to make in your life in order to deepen your faith and follow Jesus more closely?

What might you continue do to or start to do to help you keep up these disciplines after the end of Lent?

