

Practicing Spiritual Disciplines

Activity:	Duration
Dinner and Fellowship (Break the Fast)	60 Minutes
Teach the lesson "The Prayer Life of a Leader."	60 Minutes
Discussion of Celebration of Discipline	75 Minutes
Prayer Time	45 Minutes

Leader Notes:

1. You will not have time to focus on all 12 disciplines. Prayer is the selected focus because it is the foundation of all the disciplines and the key to a spiritual leader's life.
2. There is so much information to cover in Foster's book that you will need to select only certain questions from the **Application Guide** to answer. Ask the guys if there are any questions they really want to discuss that you may have chosen to pass over.
3. Share prayer requests and pray for each other's needs by name.
4. Break the three-day fast together with dinner. Another good idea is to break the fast with communion, then have dinner. Take time to talk about the impact of their fasts over dinner.
5. Encourage the guys to read **Celebration of Discipline** once yearly, focusing on one chapter (discipline) each month.
6. **Assignment for Special Project in Month 3:** have the guys write five **handwritten notes** of encouragement before the next meeting. The notes can be for anyone, but they must be handwritten and mailed to their homes. The notes should be specific, current, and sincere. The idea is to emphasize the importance of initiative with a personal touch in relationships.
7. Hand out next month's book, *Be a People Person*, by John Maxwell, along with the **Application Guide**.

Lesson

The Prayer Life of a Leader

There are rare moments when you encounter someone's face, a person, and your life is changed; we know it's true. It does happen.

Insert illustration

There is another thing we know is true... and more so.

When you come face to face with God in prayer, you will be changed.

- Can you remember your first encounter with God?

I. Aaron reacted to the pressure of the people.

1 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him." 2 Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. 4 He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." Exodus 32:1-4

The soil in which the prayer of faith takes root is a life of unbroken communion with God, a life in which the windows of the soul are always open towards the City of Rest.

David Martin M'Intyre

The ones who have most fully illustrated Christ in their character, and have most powerfully affected the world for Him, have been those who spend so much time with God as to make it a notable feature in their lives.

E.M. Bounds

Pressure-based decisions made by emotion are usually wrong decisions.

This doesn't mean we don't make decisions under pressure; it means we don't let the pressure determine the decision.

Insert illustration

Moses was gone, and fear set in.

People need a sense of stability and well-being from their leader.

If you lead, you will face pressure...

Pressure — Aaron cracked, caved in, took gold, and actually participated in sin.

I'm certain he justified it to the point where his decisions made sense.

The prayerless leader is **swayed** by the flesh.

- A.** The prayerless leader lets the people **control** them.

¹When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him." Exodus 32:1

- B.** The prayerless leader **blames** the people.

²² "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil. ²³ They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.'" Exodus 32:22-23

- C.** The prayerless leader won't take **responsibility**.

²⁴So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!" Exodus 32:24

DISCUSSION:

What happens in your life when you are "low on prayer?"

- Joy gone
- Chaos, loss of inner peace
- Loss of perspective
- Impatience
- Lose power/lose effectiveness
- Directionless
- Pressure
- What about your talents and anointing?

"There is no power like that of prevailing prayer... It turns ordinary mortals into men and women of power. It brings power. It brings fire. It brings rain. It brings life. It brings God."

Samuel Chadwick

II. Moses responded to the problem with the people

Moses didn't rush off to "do" something...

A. Moses responded with prayer.

The first thing Moses did was pray; he talked to God about the situation.
Talk to God about men; then you can talk to men about God!

B. Moses listened.

The key is listening. You can't really pray if you do all the talking.

C. God identified the problem — the people had corrupted themselves.

⁷ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. ⁸ They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'" "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses "and they are a stiff-necked people." Exodus 32:7-9

God and Moses in conversation/communication. God gave Moses the opportunity to respond when he said:

¹⁰ Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation." Exodus 32:10

"Now leave me alone."

God didn't really want to be left alone. If He really wanted to destroy the people, why engage in a conversation with Moses? Moses' relationship with God was alive and dynamic — Not fatalistic...Example: "God knows everything anyway-why pray?"

Example: Abraham – Sodom, Gen. 18: 24-33

Prayer... God wants us to engage.

- D. Moses returned to the people after interceding for them and took God's **perspective** (anger).

¹⁹ When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned, and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. Exodus 32:19

- E. Moses **confronted** Aaron.

¹⁹ When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned, and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. ²⁰ And he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it. ²¹ He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?"- Exodus 32:19-21

Moses — Courage, conviction, confidence came from God.

"**You** led them into such great sin!"

- F. Moses **aligned** his heart with the heart of God.

³² "But now, please forgive their sin – but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written." ³³ The LORD replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. ³⁴ Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin." ³⁵ And the LORD struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made." Exodus 32:32-35

Even though he was angry, he loved the people, and was even willing to sacrifice himself for them. Moses asked God to forgive them or take his life.

First time anger... took a life. This time angry... (Got God's perspective and aligned with God's heart) willing to give his life. Moses took responsibility for the people.

Paraphrase 32:32 I am willing to share the fate of these people.

Insights and Principles on Prayer

A. Prayer is a dialogue based on our **knowledge** of God.

¹² Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' ¹³ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people." ¹⁴ The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." Exodus 33:12-14

Moses' dialogue reveals what he knows of God, what God wants, and his desire to know more of God.

I love this phrase, "You have been telling me, lead these people" V.12

They are clearly in dialogue, and Moses knows enough about God to know that he can ask God for what he wants and needs.

Moses wants to know if he's doing this alone (he knows he isn't, but he wants reassurance.)

Who are you sending with me? V.12

God responds with the ultimate answer: I will go with you.

" My presence will go with you." V.14

We pray according to what we know and believe about God.

What do your prayers reveal about what you know and believe about God? (You pray as big as your God is.)

- Do you ask for a parking spot at the mall?
- Lord, give me a good day.

- Or do you ask him to restore wrecked marriages, heal the sick, and grant unsaved people new life in Christ?

B. Prayer is a **process** over time.

- *Moses – 80 years old*

There is grace for us slow learners!! But also the reality of needing to finally "get it."

C. A person of prayer doesn't always accept the **apparent** answer.

¹⁰ Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation." Exodus 32:10

Moses doesn't accept God's answer (it doesn't fit God's character — love). He must really know God! Know God's voice.

- Who's voice do you know?

D. Prayer tests our **faith**.

*"God is too good to be unkind,
He is too wise to be confused,
If I cannot trace his hand,
I can always trust his heart."
C. H. Spurgeon*

What will you ask (believe) God for? Specifically... what are you asking?

E. Prayer **transforms** the person who prays.

²⁹ When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. Exodus 34:29

You cannot come face-to-face with God and remain unchanged.

Leaders lead in prayer long before they lead in public.

Application Guide

Celebration of Discipline

Richard Foster

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 The Spiritual Disciplines: Door to Liberation

1. How did Jesus demonstrate spiritual discipline? (*Explain beyond "He prayed..." – include attitude, lifestyle, priorities, did He always follow conventional religion? etc.*)

2. What is the purpose of spiritual discipline?

3. What happens when you lose sight of the real purpose of spiritual disciplines or they are taken to extremes?

4. How would you rate yourself in the overall consistency of spiritual disciplines?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Can't Find
My Bible

God Often Asks
My Opinion

PART I: THE INWARD DISCIPLINES

Chapter 2 The Discipline of Meditation

1. Why is it important to "slow down?"

2. Is it difficult for you to "slow down?" Explain.
(For the purpose of meditation)

Chapter 3 The Discipline of Prayer

1. If God is omniscient and omnipotent, why do we pray?
What is the purpose of prayer?

2. What do you find are your *primary* motivations to pray?
(List no more than 3)

3. What role or significance does listening take in the process of prayer?

4. Rate the consistency and vibrancy of your prayer life:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Easter & Christmas						Holes in the knees of my pants	

What could you do to strengthen your prayer life?

Chapter 4 The Discipline of Fasting

1. What is the primary purpose of fasting?
2. What will always be revealed when you fast?
3. What did you learn the last time you fasted?

Chapter 5 The Discipline of Study

1. Study requires more humility and discipline than intellect. Briefly describe why in your own words.

2. As a leader, you must continually invest in yourself (personal growth) to be effective—rate (and describe) your habit of this kind of investment.

PART II: THE OUTWARD DISCIPLINES

Chapter 6 The Discipline of Simplicity

1. Describe how simplicity and freedom are so closely connected.

2. Would you describe your life as more "simple" or more "hectic?" Why?

3. What one or two things could you do to simplify your life?

Chapter 7 The Discipline of Solitude

1. What is the difference between loneliness and solitude?

2. Do you ever feel "too busy" to seek solitude?
If yes, how can you "take charge" enough to practice solitude?

Chapter 8 The Discipline of Submission

1. How do we "value" other people through our submission?

2. Do you, at times, prefer control rather than submission? Explain.

Chapter 9 The Discipline of Service

1. What is the difference between choosing to serve and choosing to be a servant?
2. What are the primary reasons you serve?
3. What local church ministry are you serving in?

PART III: THE CORPORATE DISCIPLINES

Chapter 10 The Discipline of Confession

1. How is confession both a grace and a discipline?
2. Do you find it easy or difficult to admit when you are wrong?

3. What is the value of written confession? (Try it this month)

Chapter 11 The Discipline of Worship

1. What is your personal definition of worship? Why do you worship?

2. Where, when, and how do you experience your "best" worship?

Chapter 12 The Discipline of Guidance

1. How do you see **Joshua's Men** fitting into the discipline of guidance?

Chapter 13 The Discipline of Celebration

- 1.** What produces genuine joy for you? (deep abiding and sustained fulfillment)

- 2.** How do you regain your joy when you experience the "blues"?

- 3.** As a leader, would you say your joy "rubs off" on others? (Is your joy contagious?)