

MOP Summary Spiritual Formation

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-FEEDING

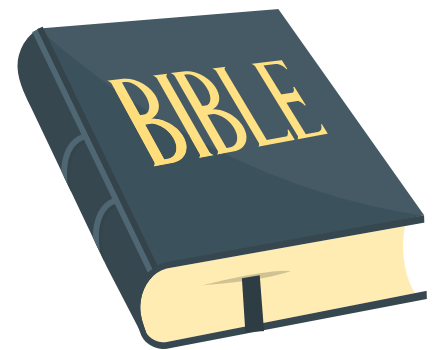
The spiritual health of missionaries is not determined so much by how well they have been taught before they left for the mission field or how healthy their home churches were, but by how well these missionaries are able to feed themselves.

Why is it even more important for those who are missionaries to be able to feed themselves spiritually?

1. We are leaving our spiritual support group - our home church, small group, accountability group, friends - and it will take a while to find replacements for them
2. We are going to be on the front lines, facing greater darkness and loneliness than we did back home
3. We may understand little of what is being taught in the church because of language
4. We may be serving in an area where there are no churches that we can attend
5. Messages that are preached, Bible studies that are led do not really speak to our heart different culture
6. Missionary team meetings don't meet this need either. Maybe only once a month, often about the work and not about the soul

What does the Bible say about self-feeding?

1. The Psalmist often speaks of meditating alone at night.
Ps 1:1-3, Ps 119:148
2. Daniel - Dan 6:10
3. Jesus - Luke 5:15-16
4. The apostle John's disciples - 1 John 2:27
5. The Lord's command to Joshua - Josh 1:8
6. Paul's command to Timothy - 1 Tim 4:6-7
7. The writer to the Hebrews - Heb 5:12-14



What does it mean to feed yourself?

1. It does not mean:
 - a) that you no longer need the Body of Christ for spiritual nurture - 1 Cor 12:21
 - b) that we do not need mentors and teachers - although our mentors and teachers may be people in Scripture and people who are no longer living
 - c) That we are making the spiritual food ourselves
2. What it does mean. If we are self-feeders, we:
 - a) Take responsibility for your own spiritual nourishment.
 - b) Establish regular meal times. Regular times in the Word and prayer.
 - c) Plan ahead - Planning a balanced and nutritious diet. You need a plan that takes you systematically takes through the "whole counsel of God"
 - d) Keep track of what we are eating, and our health. Take a spiritual inventory occasionally. Record what God has been saying to you in a journal.
 - e) Communicate with the one who prepares your food (God). What you like, what you really appreciate



THE PRIORITY OF INTIMACY WITH CHRIST

Dallas Willard divided spiritual discipline into 2 categories:

1. Inward disciplines – Solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy, sacrifice
2. Outward disciplines – study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession, submission

How to dealing with a lack of intimacy with Christ

1. Ask God for greater intimacy - John 16:24, Luke 18:1, James 4:2, Psalm 90:14
 - a) Ask God to change your heart so that you value time with Him
 - b) Ask God for the power to resolve to nurture your relationship with Him above all things
2. Ask others to pray for you
3. Find accountability partner(s) to help you stay faithful.
4. Renew your mind daily - Who God is and what He's done for you.
5. Read John Piper's book: When I Don't Desire God.
6. Identify the time-wasters in your life.
7. Pray a Daily "Prayer of Surrender"
8. When you struggle with guilt, let it drive you to grace.
9. Develop a plan; be intentional, proactive

Lessons from Mary & Martha

1. Mary has chosen what is better. Jesus had established a priority system.
Principle: Communicating with Jesus is a higher priority than serving him.
2. Martha loved the Savior also but was distracted. She had opened her home to Jesus and was serving him with much service. Principle: Our ministry can draw us away from Jesus.
3. Martha was worried (cared) and upset (emotional outburst). Principle: Even genuine concern for another can distract from an intimate relationship with God.
4. The problem was not in what Martha was doing, but that she was distracted from something more important by what she was doing. Principle: We must learn to be sensitive to the Spirit in each situation and make the best decision for how to use our time moment by moment.

JOURNALING

1. Why journal?
 - a) To remember what God is saying to you – Important enough to take notes.
 - b) To focus your thoughts – Writing stuff down keeps your mind from wandering.
 - c) To identify applications – How will you obey?
Remember the warning of Jesus: Matthew 7:26.
 - d) To see how you have grown over time when you review your journal.
 - e) To create a pool of things you can share with others
2. The SOAP method of journaling
 - a) **S** for Scripture - Read the passage for today's date.
Allow God to speak to you. When you are done, look for a verse that particularly spoke to you that day, and write it in your journal.
 - b) **O** for **Observation** - Writing down one observation about the Scripture you just read.
 - c) **A** for **Application** - Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.
 - d) **P** for **Prayer** - Write out a prayer to God in response to what you have read.
- 3) Bible reading plan found in the Life Journal.



LISTENING TO GOD

1. God is a God who has spoken but also a God who speaks
2. Adopt an attitude of attentive listening to God as we abide in Christ.
 - a) Listening is not a method as part of our relationship with God. It comes naturally as we walk with God in close fellowship
 - b) Solitude and silence are two spiritual disciplines that often accompany listening to God.
 - c) Our real goal in listening to God is not to hear something but to be attentive to Someone
 - d) Don't be discouraged if we spend time listening and hear nothing. We are training our hearts to listen. Ps 38:15 - Lord, I wait for you; you will answer, Lord my God. When God chooses to speak, we will be able to hear
3. Sometimes people like to ask a specific question of God and wait for him to answer. Habakkuk 1:13, 2:1.
4. God may speak through the direct words of Scripture, but he may also use our thoughts, conversations and events
5. Recognize the importance of discernment. We can deceive ourselves. We can manufacture a word from God. We must test the word from God. 1 Thess 5:21. Spiritual formation authors over the centuries warn us that these private words from God must always be tested.



INTERCESSORY PRAYING

Keeping track of prayer requests

1. Prayer lists on paper
2. Prayer cards and 3x5 cards
3. Ken would recommend the [PrayerMate app](#).

How do you pray for people when you don't know what their needs are?

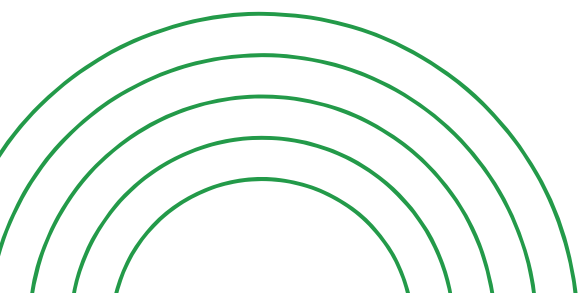
1. Pray for them what you are praying for your own spiritual life (journal entry)
2. Use biblical prayers (memorize them)
3. Listen to God and let him prompt you in what you should pray for

How do you remember to pray for missions?

1. Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out more labourers
2. Use missionary prayer letters
3. Use prayer calendars from mission organizations – [Intercede & SEND](#)
4. Specific areas of SEND have prayer guides as well - Team
5. Hope's prayer guide, [Eurasia prayer guide](#)

Develop/ revise your prayer list

1. What you want to pray for on a daily basis
2. What you want to pray for on a weekly basis
3. What you want to pray for on a monthly basis



MEDITATION

1. Meditation for the Puritans was central to all the means of grace or what we might call spiritual disciplines. Puritan meditation was always biblical meditation.
2. Occasional meditation is when one “makes use of what he sees with his eyes, or hears with his ears, as a ladder to climb to heaven.”
3. Deliberate meditation was “when a man sets apart an hour a day it may be, sets apart some time, and goes into a private closet, or a private walk, and there doth solemnly and deliberately meditate on heavenly things.”
4. Puritan mediation involved one’s thinking, one’s heart (feelings) and one’s behavior. It was not just something you did with the mind. It had to impact what you prized and what you did.
 - a)The door of understanding: What must I understand about this phrase?
 - b)The door of the heart: How should what I understand affect my emotions and will?
 - c)The door of lifestyle: How does what I understand and cherish about this phrase move me to action?
5. The Puritans recommended that meditation begin with prayer asking God to help us leave distractions behind and focus on biblical truths and end with thanksgiving for his gracious help.



DAY ALONE WITH GOD

1. Jesus’ example. Luke says more about prayer than any other Gospel. He records that Jesus prayed at critical times in his life.
2. This day has often been the highlight of MOP. But recognize that you need to hold your expectations with open hands. God may meet you in a special way, but you cannot demand that God will do so.
3. We do not want the Day Alone with God to be a one-time thing, but rather a regular part of your spiritual life on the field - once a month, once a quarter, twice a year, once a year.
4. A spiritual retreat does not need to be a full day.
5. The Helps for your DAWG guide

MOP-RECAP (MOP 302): REFLECTION QUESTIONS ON SPIRITUAL FORMATION

1. Describe your walk with Christ. What are some highs and lows you’ve experienced in your spiritual journey so far this term?
2. What spiritual disciplines do you use to connect with God?
3. What are some things that God has been teaching you?

Updated: January 2024



MOP-Recap