



# Soul Shaping Discipline

## Message Summaries and Personal Study Guides

Sunday messages can be listened to on the  
church website, [vcclive.org/media/sermons](http://vcclive.org/media/sermons)

# Soul Shaping Discipline

## Message Summaries

### **Training for Transformation • June 17**

Paul commands his protégé Timothy to “train yourself to be godly.” Spiritual training requires that we make a choice to practice various spiritual disciplines and then God works through them to shape our souls. This type of spiritual discipline produces in us an ability to more naturally and fully live like Jesus in every aspect of our lives.

### **Meditation on the Word • June 24**

The Bible is our primary source for knowing God and receiving instruction for life. Meditating on God’s Word helps us to deeply embed the Bible into our lives by: 1) thinking deeply about the meaning and application of God’s Word, 2) savoring the time spent in the Scripture, and 3) allowing the message to penetrate our daily activities.

### **Love’s Lost Language • July 1**

When it comes to prayer, for many of us, it is as if something is missing. It is as if a whole language has been lost to us and we need it to be deciphered, the code to be cracked. Jesus reveals to us that prayer is not some magical incantation or some mechanistic formula, but that prayer is “intimacy with the Ultimate One”; it is communicating with God. Jesus is the “Rosetta Stone”, the key to the mystery that makes sense of the how and the why of prayer by revealing God as our loving father.

### **Slowing & Waiting • July 8**

Hurry sickness poses a huge threat to our spiritual health, and a prescription for hurry sickness is the practices of slowing and waiting. Jesus’ response to Martha’s hurriedness poses this question for each of us: “Are you living in a rhythm that regularly has you sitting at the feet of Jesus?” The practice of slowing involves creating margin and deliberately putting ourselves in situations where we need to wait. God brings the practice of waiting into our lives when we are forced to wait and then we respond by actively trusting in God’s goodness toward us and wait for him to act.

# Soul Shaping Discipline

## Message Summaries

### **Confession is Good For the Soul • July 15**

In order to grow spiritually we must be aware of and attending to the sin in our lives. When we do not do this our lives can be characterized by moral indifference or guilt, and often some of both. Confession brings with it forgiveness, healing, a heightened awareness of sin and grace, a deepening fellowship with God, and a more graceful disposition toward others.

### **Solitude • July 22**

Jesus frequently practiced solitude in order to connect with his heavenly Father, and he invites us to do likewise: "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and rest." Solitude is intentional time alone with ourselves and God, a place for us to be open to God and listen to him. Solitude helps to free us from the influence of the world and the distractions of our busy lives, and thus is considered by many to be an essential discipline for spiritual transformation.

### **How to Listen to God • July 29**

Before Christ came to this world, God's people heard from God largely through the prophets. We can learn from the prophets to increase our ability to hear from God by: intentionally living our lives in his Presence (Samuel), learning to hear His voice (Elijah), and responding in obedience to His leading (Isaiah). Today we can listen to God more directly and intimately because we have the Spirit of God living within us.

### **Developing Spiritual Rhythms of Life • August 5**

Dallas Willard has given us a helpful three-step pathway to help us in our spiritual growth. These steps are Vision, Intention, and Means. This pathway simply means that we must recognize and believe in the possibility that God wants to conform us into the image of Christ, that we must choose to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in this transformation, and that we must actively engage in the kinds of practices that promote this work in our lives. By developing a specific plan for including these practices in our lives we begin the process of creating a rhythm to our walk with God.

# Soul Shaping Discipline

## Training for Transformation

Deuteronomy 30:19-20a; John 15:1-17; 1 Timothy 4:6-10

June 17, 2012

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### Think about it

Pursuing spiritual discipline in my life reveals my level of spirituality. True or false? Why?

The main idea of the message is that *spiritual discipline produces an ability to more naturally and fully live like Jesus Christ*. Do you think that spiritual discipline is the goal itself? Why or why not?

### Read 1 Timothy 4:6-10

1. When you consider your own life, what priority do you give to physical training versus training towards godliness?
2. Why is it so difficult to pursue Soul Shaping Discipline?
3. What was the number one barrier Sid described in his message?
4. What is the number one barrier in your life?

### Read Deuteronomy 30:19-20a

The call to spiritual discipline is not to bury yourself with a great effort but, rather, to make a choice and pursue it.

1. What small steps can you take to build *Soul Shaping Discipline* into the rhythm of your life this week?

# Soul Shaping Discipline

## Meditating on the Word

Psalm 1

June 24, 2012

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### Think about it

What role has God's Word played in your growth as a Christ-follower?

How do you most frequently engage with the Bible? What are some of your barriers to regularly engaging with the Bible?

### Read Psalm 1:1

1. Name some modern day ways that we walk in the "counsel of the wicked."

### Read Psalm 1:2

1. Why would the author use "delight" to describe our approach to God's law? Do you experience this delight?
2. Think of some ways you can incorporate meditating on God's word throughout your day; morning, mid-day or evening.

### Try it out

Text responses from today's message question, "How do you study the Bible?" will be posted on the VCC Facebook page. Go to [vcclive.org](http://vcclive.org) and click on the Facebook logo at the bottom of the page for a shortcut to the page.

Are there any new ideas that would jumpstart your own growth in the Word?

# Soul Shaping Discipline

## Love's Lost Language

Luke 11:1-4; 22:39-46

July 1, 2012

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### Think about it

Why is the discipline of prayer so vital?

In prayer, what parts of your being are engaged?

### Read Luke 11:1 and Luke 22:39

1. What do these verses say about Jesus' prayer habits?

### Read Luke 11:1-4

1. If there was one key to unlock prayer for us what would it be?
2. What part of your prayer life can be strengthened by implementing the way Jesus prayed?

### Application activity

In your personal prayer life, would you say that prayer is a formula or a mechanistic task to accomplish, or is it more than that to you? Consider your personal approach to prayer.

Choose any or all of the Prayer Primers on the back cover, adding your own personal prayer at the end. Try and use one each day for this week.

# Soul Shaping Discipline

## Slowing and Waiting

Luke 10:38-42 & Psalm 27:13-14

July 8, 2012

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### Think about it

"As we spend time in quiet and rest and contemplation, sitting at the feet of Jesus, we gain strength to act in wisdom in the hustle and bustle of a busy world. In slowing down we can hear the Spirit whisper that we are loved, and then we begin to reflect the glory of the Christ who is within us. We become the kind of people this frazzled and frightened world most needs." (p. 182, *The Good and Beautiful God*, James Bryan Smith)

### Read Luke 10:38-42

1. What is the "one thing" Jesus is referring to?

### Read Psalm 27:13-14

1. What role does "waiting" have in our relationship with God?
2. Think of a time you when you had to wait on God for an answer. How did you feel in the midst of the waiting? Looking back, do you gain a different perspective?
3. "What is the connection between technology and hurry sickness?" (p. 176, *The Good and Beautiful God*, Smith)
4. How does busyness or hurriedness create barriers between:
  - You and the Lord
  - You and others

### Try it out

1. Which practice do you need to work on the most in your life: waiting or slowing?
2. Often, the activities we need to choose between are good. Consider what activities you might need to say "no" to, in order to give more time to building up your:
  - Relationships
  - Spiritual Practices
  - Self-care (health)

# Soul Shaping Discipline

## Confession is Good for the Soul

Psalm 32:1-5; 1 John 1:5-10; James 5:16; Psalm 139:23-24

July 15, 2012

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### Think about it

Perhaps you have heard the expression “confession is good for the soul.” Do you think this is true? Why or why not?

### Read Psalm 32:1-5

1. Describe in your own words David’s experience with confession? Have you ever experienced anything like this?

### Read 1 John 1:5-10

1. What role do you think confession plays in our spiritual formation, in our increased ability to “walk in the light?”
2. The word “confess” means to “agree with.” In this context it means that we agree with God about what is sinful in our lives. How is this helpful?
3. What promise comes to us if we confess our sins?

### Read James 5:16

1. How does confessing our sins to another person help?
2. What promise is associated with this practice?

### Try it out

Read Psalm 139. Go back now and make vs. 23-24 your own prayer. Make a list of the things the Holy Spirit brings to your attention. When you are finished, write “1 John 1:9” across your list and then throw it away, trusting that God has forgiven you.



# Soul Shaping Discipline

**Solitude**

Mark 1:35-39; 6:30-32

July 22, 2012

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## Think about it

How have the pace of your life and the noisy, busyness of our culture influenced your relationship with God? Do you have a desire for solitude with God? Why or why not?

## Read Mark 1:35-39

1. Do you see the connection between a desire for solitude and a deep sense of your dependence upon God?

## Read 6:30-32

1. Why did Jesus put such a priority on “come with me, by yourself, to a quiet place and rest?”
2. How hard would it be (or is it presently) to set aside time for solitude in your life right now?

## Try it out

1. How do you respond to the metaphor of “two chairs” for spending time in solitude? When you think of the idea of what God “brings to the table” in your soul’s restoration, what is most appealing to you right now? What do you resist?
2. Try some brief times of solitude over the next couple of weeks, and reflect upon your identity in Christ (who you really are!). Read one or two of the following verses each time, and then allow God to guide your reflection upon those verses.

John 1:12

Romans 5:1

Romans 8:1

Colossians 2:13

Romans 8:38-39

Ephesians 2:4-6

Colossians 3:4

2 Corinthians 3:18

John 15:9-13

Matthew 6:25-30

Hebrews 13:5-6

Romans 5:8-11

I John 3:1-3

Philippians 1:21

John 17:25-26

# Soul Shaping Discipline

## How to Listen to God

1 Samuel 3:1-11, 19-21

July 29, 2012

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### Think about it

1. Do you have an easier time listening or talking? Why?
2. When it comes to listening to God, how do you do? What makes listening to God difficult?

### Read 1 Samuel 3:1-7

1. What do we learn about Samuel in verse 7?
2. Do you think discerning God's voice is a learning process? Explain.
3. Are there things you can do to "tune in" to God's voice?

### Read 1 Samuel 3:8-11 & 1 Samuel 3:19-21

1. Why do you think God waited for Samuel to answer before communicating his message to him?
2. What things in your life help or hinder God speaking to you?

### Try it out

1. Try the following listening exercise:

Find a partner. For one minute one of you talks while the other listens.

Now take one minute for the listener to repeat back exactly what they heard their partner saying and how they think the speaker felt about what they said.

Reverse roles and repeat the exercise.

2. Did you find it difficult to listen and repeat what you heard? Why or why not?
3. What would you like to do this week to begin to listen to God more consistently?

# Soul Shaping Discipline

## Developing Spiritual Rhythms of Life

2 Corinthians 3:18-4:16

August 5, 2012

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### Think about it

As we come to the end of our/the Soul Shaping Discipline message series, use this study guide/booklet as a chance to pull together everything you have learned over the last few weeks to create an actual action plan.

1. What practices will I seek to engage in on a daily basis? Weekly? Monthly? Yearly? Where will I engage in these disciplines? What time of day/week/month/year?
2. During this series, what have I learned about the importance of community? What spiritual disciplines will I share with a spiritual friend, or a group of friends, so as to grow together?
3. What additional activities or practices are particularly important given my personality type?  
Are there practices that are particularly needed because of some specific sin, negative pattern, or area of growth?  
How will I incorporate these into the rhythm of my spiritual practices?
4. How will I need to adjust my schedule in order to consistently choose this rhythm of life?  
What arrangements do I need to make with those I live with?  
Do I need to have any discussions with those I work with in order to make this possible?

**After going through the questions above and capturing in writing your desire and plan for establishing spiritual rhythms, take a break and then come back to this. Ask yourself the following questions:**

5. How does this look and feel to me now? Is it personal enough? Balanced? Realistic?
6. Are you able to think of it as a flexible undertaking rather than a legalistic straightjacket?
7. Are there any questions or concerns that you would like to raise with a friend or others who can pray for you?

# Soul Shaping Discipline

## Prayer Primers

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### The True Life Prayer

Father, our Father,  
How great is the breadth, the length,  
The height, and the depth of your heavenly love!  
Cover this broken earth with the beauty of your glory.  
Show us the face of your Son,  
The one who has undone our due death  
And given us His true life.  
Today may I taste again the hope of Christ...

### The Renown Prayer

Our Father,  
There is none like you.  
You alone deserve all praise.  
May your fame run from sunrise to sunset  
And trace the earth from east to west.  
Light my heart on fire, illumine my mind.  
Find me at peace through the pain of Christ.  
Find me with blood-bought resurrection life.  
Find me empowered & comforted by your Spirit.  
Today may I be a bearer of your Gospel light...

### The Radiant Prayer

Our Father, Our God in Heaven  
Who has not forgotten His promises and people on Earth,  
Thank you for the suffering of your Son  
That has brought us sweet salvation.  
Thank you for making your enemies your family.  
You have chased us with grace.  
You have embraced us with the power and comfort of your Spirit.  
Through us, today, may your love radiate...

### The Gospel Prayer

Father, you are making all that is wrong right  
Through the person and work of Jesus Christ,  
Whose power and presence is on mission and alive  
In the church...