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**FNDN 102 Personal Application Assignment** | Spiritual Formation

**INTRODUCTION**

Spiritual formation includes developing intentional habits that enable us to grow in self-awareness and awareness of God. In this exercise you will have the opportunity to practice one of several activities that have facilitated (mostly Christian) spiritual formation for centuries and enabled people to posture themselves in openness to God. These practices can help you grow:

***Mentally*:** helping you discipline your mind

***Spiritually*:** enabling to you posture yourself in a way that is open to God

***Relationally*:** both to God and others

***Physically & Emotionally*:** both contemplative and active practices can contribute to holistic health

**Part 1 | Choose a discipline stream from the list below that reflects either what you *desire* to explore or are convinced that you *need* to explore**

* Worship
* Opening yourself to God / Creator
* Sharing life with others
* Listening to scriptures
* Acting the life of Christ
* Prayer

**Part 2 | Pick an application (practice) of the spiritual discipline stream you chose in STEP 1 (see page 2 below FORMATTING for suggestions)**

There are actually limitless ways you could practice each of, or a combination of, these disciplines. Once you have identified a practice, **we recommend following one of the set plans** for the week outlined below.[[1]](#footnote-1) We have chosen options that would not necessarily already be part of student life, like chapel. Instead, we are inviting you to broaden your capacity for listening and attending to God / Creator and yourself as a spiritual person. ***Keep a log of your activities (include day, activity, time, location and effect) and include that log along with your response.***

**Part 3 | Write a one page reflection**

After following a set plan for five days this week write a one-page reflection This is due at the start of class on the date specified in the proposed course outline of your syllabus (see formatting details below). Your reflection should address the following questions (separate paragraph for each):

1. Which *practice and/or style* of discipline did you choose (see Step 1)? Why?
2. What challenges, if any, did you encounter in trying to maintain this practice and what did you learn about yourself in the process?
3. In retrospect, and after only one week of this practice, would you like to continue it? Try another practice, or style? Why?

**FORMATTING** Your reflection should be one page in length and APA format (typed, 12 point font size, New Roman Times font, double-spaced with one-inch margins). Include a title page (there is a template on the Moodle site) and save your file as "First Name\_Last Name\_Spiritual-Formation." Submit in Word™ or .pdf format. Submit in digital format via Moodle before the start of class on the due date specified in the syllabus.

**OPTIONS for PART 1 & 2**

Pick ***one*** of the following to practice for five days. Most of the following practices are informed by the Christian tradition, but few are unique to it. This is an opportunity for you to consider which of these practices are consistent with, or contribute to, your developing understanding of spirituality.

**Worship (pick one)**

* ***Visio divina*** or “holy seeing” with art:Select works of art (e.g. in the library gallery, or a book of sacred art) and pay attention to it for 15 minutes. Record your thoughts or observations in your activity log (feel free to create your own) so you have material to review in your reflection.
* ***Celebration*:** Identify what brings you delight and each day block at least 15 minutes each day to find a way to enjoy those things fully and consciously before God/Creator. It might be sharing a meal, running, dancing, singing. Thank God for those gifts: write a song, create a dance, throw a small party. Find a way to celebrate those opportunities, while remaining conscious of God.
* ***Meditate on the names of God*:** Find a list of the names of God and each day for five days take 10-15 minutes to focus on one of them. Write down as many ways as you can in which you have noticed that aspect of God’s character at work in your own life. Take time to reflect on each one and thank God for being close to you in that way.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Opening yourself to God/Creator**

* ***Unplugging*:** each day spend 15 minutes alone and disconnected from all electronic devices, to journal, walk, or be still with God. Ask God / the Creator to draw attention to what you need to hear or what people you should care for, pray for, or listen to. Ask God to guide you into all truth. We recommend writing those prompts down as a way of paying attention to them. The point is to unplug, and specifically make yourself available to God/Creator and invite Him to draw your attention to what is most important for you to notice right now.

**Sharing life with others (pick one)**

* Investing in others, regardless of one’s understanding of spirituality, is a means of personal / spiritual formation. Deliberately and sacrificially set aside at least 15 minutes each day to spend time with, listen to, encourage, or help someone else. In short, invest in other people, and give them the gift of your life, skills, and your listening ear.
* Ask a person you trust if you could meet with them for 15 minutes each day for five days to share your thoughts, feelings, and any burdens and to pray for each other. Share only what you feel comfortable and commit to guarding each other’s privacy.

**Listening to the Scriptures / sacred text (pick one)**

* *Commit to reading a chapter* in, for example, Proverbs, the Psalms, or another sacred text each day. Commit at least 15 minutes to the process. Ask God to guide you into all truth and draw your attention to what you should notice. Take notes. If questions arise, write them down and take steps to find answers to them.
* *Memorization*: Choose a Bible verse, cluster of verses, or a whole chapter to memorize in five days. Make your goal achievable. Take 15 minutes each day to read the text to yourself out loud. Hear it. Pay attention to it*. TIP: combine visual and listening techniques to help you embed the text (e.g. listen to audio versions while reading).*

**Incarnating (act out) the life of Christ (pick one)**

* ***Bless / encourage:*** Each day ask God to direct your attention to someone you see to bless or encourage. It should be someone you can share with in person (not by email or text). Take 15 mins to pray about a verse to share or a prayer you could write out, or any other form of encouragement you could share with that person. Then share it.
* ***Control your tongue*:** Commit for the five days to not making any negative statements about others (personal or in the news), not participating in gossip, mocking, cutting others down, etc. Instead, choose to either keep quiet when tempted to be negative or deliberately pause to think with care about the person you are tempted to put down. Consider finding ways to encourage that person instead.

**Prayer (pick one)**

* ***Breath prayer:*** This combines the calming focus of mindful breathing with attention to God. Take five uninterrupted minutes at the beginning, middle, and end of each day to be still and unplugged and ask God to help you be aware of His presence as you repeat the same prayer. You could also practice this as you walk to class. Breathe in with one brief prayer and exhale with another. Examples:
	+ *The Jesus Prayer:*
		- Inhale with the words, *Jesus, Son of David*
		- Exhale with the words *Have mercy on me a sinner*. You could create your own, e.g.: *Jesus, You are the Way, the Truth, the Life,* followed by, *Help me to live every moment consciously with You.*
	+ Alternatives (see [HERE](https://gravitycenter.com/practice/breath-prayer/))
		- Inhale with, *Lord in your mercy*
		- Exhale with, *Hear my prayer*
* ***Fixed hour prayer:*** This is a simple practice, common to many religious traditions, but you may find it a bit of a challenge on a student schedule. Set a timer for a fixed time (at least five times for a total of 15 mins) throughout the day. When the timer goes, pause what you are doing to whisper a prayer of gratitude or worship, a prayer for a particular person in need, or whisper a breath prayer. The point is to learn to pause regularly to be attentive to God.
* ***Liturgical prayer:*** Find a book of written or liturgical prayers and take 15 minutes to first be still and then slowly read the prayer for the day (as appropriate) or one of the prayers in the text. Consider doing this together with a small group at the same time each day and even read the prayer out loud together. Take time in silence to let the words sink in. Ask God to shape your awareness of Him around the words in the prayer. Let it guide your prayers for your day, for others. See, for example, *The Book of Common Prayer*, *Carmina Gaedelica*

**RELATED READING**

Benner, David G. (2004) *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery.* Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.

Calhoun, Adle Ahlberg. (2015) *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books.

Laird, Martin. (2006) *Into the Silent Land.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

St. Gregory Palamas. *Those who Practice a Life of Stillness.* Chapter 7. In *The Philokalia,* vol.

 IV, 337.

Willard, D. (2002). *Renovation of the Heart*. Colorado Springs, CO, USA: Nav Press.

**MARKING RUBRIC**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ACTIVITY LOG** |  | **Value (10)** | **MARK (10)** |
| Log submitted  | (Entries 2 pts per day) | 10 | 10 |
|  |  | **10** | **10** |
|  |  |  |  |
| **REFLECTION** |  | **Value (35)** | **MARK (35)** |
| Questions answered | (3x1 pts each) | 3 | 3 |
| Length (full page) | 1 – half or less / 1.5 – three quarters / 2 - full | 2 | 2 |
| 1. Degree of engagement | 5 – Basic response, undeveloped / 7.5 – Adequate detail, thoughtful / 10 – Detailed, thoughtful, articulate (these numbers are reference guides) | 10 | 10 |
| 2. Degree of engagement | 5 – Basic response, undeveloped / 7.5 – Adequate detail, thoughtful / 10 – Detailed, thoughtful, articulate (these numbers are reference guides) | 10 | 10 |
| 3. Degree of engagement | 5 – Basic response, undeveloped / 7.5 – Adequate detail, thoughtful / 10 – Detailed, thoughtful, articulate (these numbers are reference guides) | 10 | 10 |
|  |  | **35** | **35** |
|  |  |  |  |
| **PROFESSIONALISM / FORMATTING** |  | **Value (5)** | **MARK(5)** |
| Title Page | 0 – not included / 1 – not APA complete / 2 – APA complete | 2 | 2 |
| Grammar / Formatting | 1 = 4+ errors / 2 = 2-3 errors / 3 = no errors | 3 | 3 |
|  |  | **5** | **5** |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  | **50** | **50** |
|  |  | **5** | **5** |
|  | DEDUCTIONS (if applicable) |  |  |
| **COMMENTS** |  |  |  |
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1. The framework for these practices is informed by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Download this resource as a starting point: https://www.navigators.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/navtool-names-of-god.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)