

## Spiritual Practice Heart Course

**Objective:** The objective of the Spiritual Practice Heart Course is to introduce students to the practices and ‘disciplines’ that Christians for centuries have drawn on and enacted in order to foster deeper intimacy with God. Oftentimes, we have good desires—for a more intimate prayer life, or deeper insight from God’s word—but we don’t know how to get there. So we give up our pursuit, tired from wandering aimlessly, and end up feeling guilty and more distant from God instead of closer. The Spiritual Practices Heart Course will give us directions for our journey towards intimacy with God. While the word *discipline* may make us want to run and hide, the class will show us how one can bring their *desires* and *spiritual disciplines* together in order to grow more deeply in love with the Father, by the grace and mercy available in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

**Goals for the course:** Students will build the habits of several (or more) spiritual disciplines into their lives. They will understand the purpose of the spiritual disciplines in the lives of Christians, and how they will be able to experience them as they pursue them intentionally within the community of God. Finally, students will be encouraged to identify with a spiritual mentor within the congregation, as well as a spiritual mentor from Christian history (e.g. Francis of Assisi, Thomas Merton, Teresa of Ávila, Brother Lawrence, or John of the Cross.) that they can return to again and again for guidance and inspiration.

### **Teaching Bibliography for the course:**

- Holy Bible
- Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*
- John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul*
- Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*
- Teresa of Ávila, *Selected Readings*
- Francis of Assisi, *Selected Readings*
- Thomas Merton, selections from *The Contemplative Life*

### **Course Schedule and Class Descriptions**

1. **Designed for “W.O.R.S.H.I.P”** This class will explore the purpose of the spiritual disciplines and give an overview to the variety of disciplines available to the Christian. Students will be introduced to this path, a journey called the

“contemplative life.” Students will be introduced to the life and thoughts of *Thomas Merton*.

2. “**W**orship”: This class will explore how to value the right stuff, and it will address the practices that help us orient to the most important things in life, including: *sabbath, worship, the Lord’s Supper, and the “rule for life.”*
3. “**O**penness”: This class will focus on the God that can’t be controlled and the practices that help us to live with this reality: *contemplation, journaling, practicing the presence*. Students will be introduced to *Brother Lawrence*.
4. “**R**elinquishment”: This class will focus on how to let go in a world dedicated to accumulation, and the practices that foster a different way of being: *silence, solitude, retreat, and simplicity*. Students will be introduced to *John of the Cross*.
5. “**S**haring Your Life”: This class will focus on living your life in a culture dedicated to privacy, and will focus on spiritual practices that help foster interdependence and community, including: *spiritual mentoring, spiritual friendship, discipling, and chastity*.
6. “**H**earing from God” This class will focus on practices that form the mind of Christ in us, including: *bible study, devotional reading (Lectio divina), meditation, and memorization*.
7. “**I**ncarnating Jesus”: This class will focus on practices that help us ‘be Jesus’ to the world, including the practices of: *service, compassion, care of the earth, justice, truth-telling and humility*. Students will be introduced to the life and thinking of *Francis of Assisi*.
8. “**P**raying My Life”: This final class will focus on practices that can lead to a life of “prayer without ceasing” and will explore the following disciplines: *contemplative prayer, fasting, intercessory and conversational prayer, and prayer walking*. Students will be introduced to the life and thinking of *Teresa of Ávila*.  
\*\*If the opportunity is available, students will taken on a special field trip, so that they can experience a prayer walk, and end the course in a special contemplative practice.\*\*