DRAWING NEAR TO GOD THROUGH SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

God values proximity over performance. He would rather we focus on drawing nearer than being better. This is beautifully illustrated when Jesus prioritized Mary's choice to sit at His feet over Martha's frantic striving to serve Him (Luke 10:38–42) and when He reminded us that fruitful transformation is the passive result of simply abiding in Him (John 15:5).

When built upon this truth that God values proximity over performance, biblical spiritual practices are completely reoriented. They are not individual or corporate tools to "partner" with God in making ourselves "better" for Him. Nor are they cosmic levers used to persuade God to bless our personal agendas. Instead, they are channels of Divine persuasion that break down our stubborn self-will; producing a continuous attitude of repentance and aligning our hearts with *His* through the appropriation of His Grace alone. As we draw nearer to God and surrender to Him, *He* is the One who changes us by His grace, by increasingly aligning us with His heart and mind.

Viewed through this foundational lens, the spiritual practices expressed across the Old and New Testaments can be summarized into four primary avenues of relational surrender and ongoing realignment. Those avenues, as summarized below, are not the means by which we endear God to us through our efforts to "get" Him to align His will with *ours*, but the means by which we abide in God's presence and allow Him to align our will with *His*.

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1. Practices of Divine Persuasion

Philippians 2:13 – *"For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."* This avenue is the primary means by which God rewrites our thoughts, exposes our false self-sufficiency, and reshapes our desires to match His own.

- **Scripture Meditation:** Rather than scanning the Bible for rules to execute or promises to claim for our own goals, we chew on and ponder God's character. We draw near to see the beauty of Christ's finished work, allowing His words to actively convince us of His goodness, which naturally leads us to a lifestyle of repentance and shifts our minds toward His truth.
    - Psalm 1:2 – *"But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."*
    - Joshua 1:8 – *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night..."*
- **Surrendered Prayer:** Instead of treating prayer as an exercise to persuade God to sign off on our plans, it becomes an act of helpless dependence. We draw near to the throne of grace to lay down our weapons, opening our hearts for the Holy Spirit

to change our "want-tos" and gently persuade us to abandon our self-will for the Father's.
    - Hebrews 4:16 – *"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*
    - Luke 22:42 – *"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."*

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2. Practices of Relinquishing Control

Galatians 2:20 – *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."* These practices are intentional, structural interruptions designed to break our addiction to personal ambition, productivity, and self-reliance.

- **Sabbath Rest:** This weekly cessation from labor is a radical declaration that the universe does not rely on our effort. We step back from our own striving to rest completely in God's provision, repenting of our anxiety and drawing near to the truth that our identity is secured by His grace, completely independent of our output.
    - Exodus 20:8 – *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."*
    - Hebrews 4:9–10 – *"So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his."*
- **Fasting:** Abstaining from physical food or comfort is the holistic act of emptying ourselves to create a spiritual vacuum. By refusing to satisfy our immediate physical desires, we explicitly subdue our personal appetites, allowing the Holy Spirit to reorder our priorities and align our hunger with His kingdom.
    - Matthew 6:16 – *"And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites..."*
    - Joel 2:12 – *"'Yet even now,' declares the Lord, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning...'"*

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3. Practices of Silent Yielding

Galatians 5:16 – *"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."* These practices involve stepping entirely away from human noise, performance, and public reputation to let God address our hidden motives.

- **Solitude:** Following the pattern of Jesus withdrawing to desolate places, we step away from the crowd. We drop the exhausting act of managing how others perceive

us or treat us and draw near to the Father in secret, creating an unfiltered space where His grace can break our pride, expose our need for alignment, and speak healing over our wounds.
    - Mark 1:35 – *"And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed."*
    - James 4:8 – *"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."*
    - Psalm 73:28 – *"But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works."*
    - Psalm 34:18 – *"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."*
    - Hebrews 4:15–16 – *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*
- **Silence:** We quiet our defensive arguments, future anxieties, and cultural noise to listen for the "low whispering voice" of God. It is a posture of pure yielding, silencing our internal monologues so that His voice can speak truth to our hearts, leading us into a deeper posture of ongoing repentance.
    - 1 Kings 19:11-13 – *"And he said, 'Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord.' And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'"*
    - Psalm 46:10 – *"Be still, and know that I am God."*
    - Psalm 62:1,5 – *"For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him."*
    - Habakkuk 2:20 – *"But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him."*

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4. Practices of Communal Submission

1 Corinthians 12:13 – "*For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."* True transformation does not

happen in isolation; God shatters our individual self-will by anchoring us within Christ's Body and physically reminding us of His grace.

- **Baptism:** This foundational corporate practice is the ultimate physical demonstration of dying to self-will and rising into a new communal reality. Believers do not undergo baptism to offer a personal achievement or showcase human strength; they submit their bodies to be buried in the water and lifted out to new life by God. It is a visual proclamation that our old, self-reliant identity has been crucified with Christ, and we have been visibly knit into a localized community of grace. It anchors the believer in the absolute finality of their new identity, signaling a lifetime of walking in mutual submission alongside the church body.
    - Romans 6:3–4 – *"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."*
    - Galatians 3:27 – *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."*
    - Colossians 2:12 – *"...having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead."*
- **Corporate Worship:** Gathering with other believers to sing, praise, pray, and fellowship. In worship, we collectively look away from our own lives and focus entirely on God's glory, submitting our individual and corporate preferences to our head, who is Christ.
    - Hebrews 10:24–25 – *"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."*
    - Colossians 3:16 – *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."*
- **The Lord's Supper:** This corporate practice is the ultimate visual and physical practice of divine persuasion. Believers do not perform communion to offer something to God; they merely *receive* the bread and the cup. It forces the church to draw near and look away from their attempts at "being better," surrendering to the absolute sufficiency of Christ's broken body and shed blood. It triggers automatic repentance as believers examine their hearts and realign with the grace that bought them.
    - John 6:53–56 – "So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will

raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.'"

    - 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 – *"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."*

- **Confession and Communal Companionship:** Authentically opening our lives to others in deepening relationships and confessing our faults. Because Christ has already paid for our sins—as declared in communion—we no longer have to pretend to be "good" or fear human judgment. Rather than a works-oriented enforcement of actions, corporate life is a practice of walking alongside one another in the journey. We draw near to a community of grace where we carry one another's burdens, offer gentle encouragement, and help point each other back to Christ as He grows us.
    - Galatians 6:2 – *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."*
    - 1 Thessalonians 5:11 – *"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."*
    - James 5:16 – *"Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."*

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5. Practices of Blessing

Ephesians 2:10 – *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."* This avenue is the outward overflow of a heart fully persuaded by God's grace. We do not serve, give, or speak to earn God's favor or secure our salvation; rather, we effortlessly release what we have already received, becoming physical conduits of His kingdom to a broken world.

- **Sacrificial Giving:** Rather than viewing our finances and resources as personal property to hoard or as a cosmic leverage point to secure more wealth, we hold them with open hands. Giving becomes a practical act of faith where we actively dismantle the illusion of self-sufficiency, trusting that our security is anchored in God's provision while meeting the tangible needs of others.
    - 2 Corinthians 9:7 – *"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."*

    - Proverbs 3:9 – *"Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce..."*
- **Serving According to Spiritual Giftedness:** Rather than viewing our unique capabilities as trophies for individual prestige or self-generated tools to advance personal agendas or platforms, we recognize them as sovereign deposits of the Holy Spirit. Exercising our spiritual gifts is the Spirit-empowered deployment of Christ's diverse grace through us to build, mature, and unify His universal and local church body. We step out in service not out of religious obligation or to earn an identity or reputation, but to joyfully watch the Spirit utilize our specific assignments to build up the entire community in love.
    - 1 Corinthians 12:7 – *"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."*
    - Ephesians 4:11–12 – *"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ..."*
    - 1 Peter 4:10 – *"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace..."*
- **Sharing the Gospel:** Instead of treating evangelism as an awkward sales pitch or a forced duty to rack up spiritual points, it becomes the natural, joyful reporting of a rescue mission, flowing from the heart of one who has been rescued. In the normal practices of daily life, we look for opportunities to love the one in front of us and speak truth in love, lowering our defenses to share the good news of Christ's finished work with a world desperately in need of redemption.
    - Romans 10:15 – *"...As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'"*
    - 1 Peter 3:15 – *"...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you..."*