

Seven Disciplines Toward Spiritual Maturity

Come Together

Dwayne Jeffreys purchased a sextant from a seller at a street market as an ornament. The seller said, "I don't know how it works or even if it does. It's yours for \$75!" Dwayne took the plunge.

In Dwayne's words - "Over a decade later, I used it to record the angles between distant objects in a training exercise. Joining my fellow trainees below [the boat's] deck, we plotted our position relative to a narrow inlet some nautical miles away.

We could have used the expensive (and immediately accurate) satellite navigation system sitting dormant beside us, however, there's something special about the relationship with learning, understanding, and acting (initially in faith) that made this process so much more thrilling. Hours later, we all peered into the darkness for the first red and green flashes of the inlet navigation buoys. Yes, there they were! Right where we expected them to be!

We had double-checked each other's readings and calculations, taken turns as lookout, assisted one another in bouts of sea sickness, then celebrated wildly in our moderate achievement! Even while mooring the vessel, we were plotting our next maritime triumph.

Navigation can be a solo effort. However, in sharing the experience, *we lessened the burden on the one, we protected ourselves against the many simple errors that could lead to devastating outcomes, and we multiplied our joy at journey's end. As one who can tend to reclusiveness, my spiritual journey is far safer and more satisfying as a crew member.*"ⁱ

[SEXTANT - latin for "sixth" - a navigation instrument that measures the angular distance between two visible objects comprising one-sixth of a circle.]

We are definitely better together as a community!

Community – one of the 7 disciplines for spiritual maturity.

(defined) - a *feeling of fellowship* with others, as a result of *sharing* common attitudes, interests, and goals.ⁱⁱ

Feeling – Fellowship - Sharing

We could say, then that a community is a group of people who share a sense of togetherness – or sameness.

The Body of Christ is defined in the same terms, adding the influence of God through Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

According to Hebrews 10:12-25... Community in Christ shares “sameness”.

We All have the Same CLEANSING (“sanctification”).

¹² “But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ...

¹⁴ For by *a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified*. (Those who are continually being cleansed.)

Together We Share the Same HOLY SPIRIT within Us.

¹⁵ “And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after [the resurrection] saying,

¹⁶ ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord:

I will put my laws on their hearts,
and write them on their minds,’

¹⁷ then he adds,

‘I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.’”

¹⁸ “Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Together We Share the Same ASSURANCE.

²² **let us draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Jesus said, “The things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts...”

Matthew 15:18-19a

Together We Can Hold Tightly to Our HOPE.

²³ **Let us hold fast** the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

Together We Can – and should - INSPIRE Christ-like Behavior

²⁴ And **let us consider how to stir up one another** to love and good works, ²⁵ 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.” ⁱⁱⁱ

Christians are to spur one another to "love".

This is the term for a love that is not self-seeking, a love whose modeled example is the Cross of Christ (1 John 4:10).

This is a most important Christian obligation, and believers are to help one another attain it.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, “⁷Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, ⁸ so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

It is interesting that this kind of love is, in a similar way, a product of community activity.

Love is a virtue that requires others for its exercise. One may practice faith or hope alone, but not love.

However, Barna™ research recently reported that 56% of Christians believe their spiritual life is entirely private. ^{iv}

The readers of the Hebrew letter are to urge (even *exacerbate*) one another to "good deeds" as well as to love.

We have to “come together” to be completely Biblical.

We Were Never Meant to be ALONE.

We need spiritual COMPANIONSHIP.

We need spiritual voices of WISDOM.

We need spiritual tools of INSTRUCTION.

We need spiritual COMPASSION.

We need a PLACE, a workshop, so to speak, *where our gifts can complement the work of Christ in others.*

1 Peter 4:10-11

¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

God’s Community has No BOUNDARIES.

Matthew 28:19

*“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore **go and make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

At Pentecost, Peter spoke to thousands of people from 15 different language groups in Jerusalem saying, “*Repent and be baptized, every one of*

you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.'

⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." (Acts 2:38-39, 41)

Colossians 2:2-5

Paul said, "My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is."

2 Chronicles 31:18 is recorded history of Hezekiah's restoration of the community of faith in the land of Judah following a series of disobedient kings.

"They included all the little ones, the wives, and the sons and daughters of the whole community listed in these genealogical records. For they were faithful in consecrating themselves (or they faithfully took appropriate measures that declared themselves sacred)."

To join the community of the Body of Christ is to take the right steps in making peace with God through Jesus, His only Son.

Romans 10:9-10

"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹ As Scripture says, 'Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.' ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

ⁱ By Dwayne Jeffries, Australian Christian Author, Good News Unlimited board of directors – as quoted through YouVersion Bible App reading plan – Real Hope: Community of Christ, day 5.

ⁱⁱ © 2022 Lexico.com, powered by Oxford Languages with Bing Translator

ⁱⁱⁱ All scripture references will be taken from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.

^{iv} Articles in Faith and Community, Barna research, Barna.com, March 16, 2022