

Practice Spiritual Multi-tasking

Multi-tasking sounds like something we want to avoid when simplifying our spiritual lives. And while that's probably true in general, there are exceptions to the rule.

Multi-tasking originated as a technological term to speak of a computer performing more than one function at a time, but it makes me think of plate spinners who performed in variety shows in the days of black-and-white television. A plate spinner would balance a dinner plate on top of a tall, pencil-thin wooden rod, then strike the plate's edge to make it spin. Then he would quickly start a second one spinning on another rod, then a third, on up to about ten or twelve. By the time he'd started the last one, the first plates would begin to wobble, so he'd run to the beginning of the line and quickly give each a new spin.

Sometimes people think that by advocating the number of spiritual disciplines I mention in *Simplify Your Spiritual Life* and in *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* that I'm encouraging them to be spiritual plate spinners. They picture themselves trying to keep an overwhelming number of disciplines balanced, spending more time concerned about the mere maintenance of them than the fruit of them.

Just because we can isolate a discipline (like prayer, Bible intake, worship, or fasting) and examine it doesn't necessarily mean that it is *practiced* in isolation from other disciplines. In fact, it's not unusual to perform five or six

disciplines during the same devotional period, most of them simultaneously.

For example, simply by having a "quiet time" you are practicing one form of the discipline of silence and solitude. And during that time you will likely engage in worship, Bible intake, and prayer. That's three more disciplines. Many will also write their insights from Scripture, their meditations, or other entries into a journal during this time. And if you happen to be fasting, that's half-a-dozen individual disciplines being performed during the same devotional period. You're doing more than you realize.

So while we can distinguish various spiritual disciplines, we do not always have to separate them. Spiritual multi-tasking is not about spinning many spiritual plates; it's about many ways of filling your one spiritual plate with delicious, satisfying, divine nourishment for your soul.

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