There is no better example, no superior practitioner, no equal in the practice of the discipline of submission that Jesus Christ. In his own words he testified, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.” John 4:24 and “I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.” John 6:38

Each year as we enjoy the Christmas story we are impressed by the submission of young Mary as she tells the angel Gabriel, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.” Luke 1:38 It was this submission to God’s will that she ingrained in her son so that in the Garden of Gethsemane he could face the end saying, “Not my will but yours be done.” Luke 22:42

What freedom corresponds to submission? It is the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way.

Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline, p. 111

Practicing the Discipline of Submission means willingly choosing to let another person take the lead.

Valerie Hess & Marti Watson Garlett, Ph.D., Habits of a Child’s Heart, p.111

sub·mis·sion  noun  sub  miSšən
: the state of being obedient
: the act of accepting the authority or control of someone else

It is critical to draw the distinction between submission and subordination. When we are a subordinate less our choice while with submission, at least as understood in the context of the Spiritual Disciplines, it is a choice of the one submitting. Any attempt at forced submission is foreign to the concept of the Spiritual Discipline of Submission. We have, in this practice, the freedom to submit to one another.

Sometimes the love of Christ in our lives and an openness to living lives of mutual submission can create stuck conversations. I remember my parents each wishing to mutually submit. Mother might say, “I’d like to have some potato salad for supper.”
What would you like?” Daddy would respond, “Sure I’d like some too if that’s what you want.” Mom would pick up the thread, “Well I do, but only if it’s what you want. If you’d prefer something else I could go with that.” And this round of conversation would become the equivalent of being stuck at a door way each insisting that the other go through first, each “after you,” followed by a “no, after you.” Of course this isn’t the norm, usually we want our own way.

Things to remember regarding Submission

- Jesus modeled the concept that leadership is found in becoming the servant of all.
- Submission and self-denial are linked in that both are about our not having to have our own way.
- We have the freedom to give up our own rights for the good of others.
- The Bible calls Jesus followers to lives of mutual submission: “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Ephesians 5:21
- REMEMBER the limits of the discipline of submission are at any point where it becomes destructive. (We must obey God rather than man and not submit destructive ends even if there are severe consequences.)

As thou wilt; what thou wilt; when thou wilt.
Thomas á Kempis

Richard Foster’s Seven Acts of Submission

1. Submission to the Triune God
   “Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, ‘Take me, O Lord, as wholly Yours. I lay all my plans at Your feet. Use me today in Your service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in You.’” Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, p. 70

2. Submission to the Scripture
   To be submissive to hear, receive, and obey the Word of God

3. Submission to our family
   Lives of mutual submission where we listen and share

4. Submission to our neighbors
   We set our agendas aside to meet needs large or small. Every encounter with those we meet in daily life is an opportunity to live in submission.

5. Submission to the believing community, the body of Christ
   Maybe especially in churches there is the temptation to be under no authority but God. However he has established his body for our benefit.
6. Submission to the broken and despised
   To care for the “widows and orphans” for those who cannot speak up or
care for themselves. We become their servants meeting needs.

7. Submission to the world
   “… do all they can to make the world better for their stay in it.” Ibid p. 78
   Living as good stewards of our world and its people.

Ideas for parents to assist children in practicing this discipline

The most profound way to assist children is by modeling the practice you hope will
be embedded in their lives. Beyond the modeling:

For Younger Kids:

- Initiate play with your kids letting them set the play agenda with you
  simply submitting to the fun.
- Do not tolerate whining and pleading—move to conversation and assist
  them in understanding the need for submission
- Bullying: don’t allow your kids to bully and intervene if your child is bullied
- Create a fair and equitable system so siblings have to “submit” to the
  choice of other siblings re. simple activity choices or food choices.

For Older Kids:

- Encourage journaling about life, especially times when they choose to
  submit and choose not to and what was going on in each case
- Have frank conversations about times in your growing up when you
  submitted to peer pressure that you wish you hadn’t and time resisted
- Help your child find opportunities to work/volunteer in an organization
  where there is a healthy chain of command
- Maybe volunteer as a family on a project addressing some injustice

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better
than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the
interests of other. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
Who, being in
very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made
himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, and being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to
death—even death on a cross! Philippians 2:3-8
1. What have you found most enjoyable and most challenging on your journey into the Spiritual Disciplines?

2. How do you react to the idea of intentionally placing yourself in submission to another person for their benefit?

3. If subordination is involuntary and submission is chosen how can choosing submission bring freedom?

4. The next Spiritual Discipline we will investigate is “Service”. When we set our agenda aside to submit to the need of another and care for them over ourselves how is this related to service?

5. If submission is a choice, is for another’s benefit, and is meant to bring us freedom how do you see those three working out in real life?

6. Go back above and read Philippians 2:3-8. How does this directive from Paul make you feel? What grade would you give yourself in how well you are following his directive?

7. Think about the people you interact with regularly. Think about people in community with needs for justice. Consider the world and how we might make it a better place. Now where would you practicing the discipline of submission improve things?
Twelve Months to Grow: Submission:
I Don’t Have to Get My Way
Jeff Cinquemani
Feb. 28, 2015

Of all the disciplines, this one is the most risky – now you’re interested, aren’t you? No really, Richard Foster writes (Author – Celebration of Disciplines) – All of the disciplines have the potential to be destructive if misused; however submission is especially susceptible to this problem. We need to be clear regarding the limits within this discipline and the role it plays within the Christian’s journey of denying self while seeing ourselves as God sees us.

Prayer

It was my wife’s 40th birthday, and I had obtained a pretty nice favor from a friend who gifted me his newly built condo on the ocean for a week. I thought it would be a perfect getaway to surprise my wife on her special day. I had made all the arrangements with my friend. I had asked my wife’s best friend to pack her suitcase, and I even had some other friends call and make phony appointments that they knew she would never be able to make. It was perfectly set up.

So the day came. I had packed the car the night before so all Tami knew was that I was taking the day off, and we would have some time together. We got in the car and I nonchalantly suggested, “Hey, why don’t we ride out to the ocean?” Honestly – she was not that excited, but she didn’t want to spoil the mood so she said, “Well sure, that could be fun.”

A side bar: my wife loves the ocean. She just doesn’t like being all sticky from the salty breeze and then having to ride all the way home that way. She much prefers staying there, so I really wasn’t daunted by her lack of enthusiasm.

I just stuck the CD in with her favorite mix, put the car in gear, and drove to the beach. As we were crossing over the intercostal and in between songs, I popped the question, “So you okay with us going to the beach?” – “Oh yeah” she replied, “You know me, I love walking along the ocean; it will be fine.” Then I flatly said, “Then let’s just stay here for a few days.”

“Ha” she laughed, “Yeah, wouldn’t that be nice.”

“No, really” I coaxed, “Let’s take a few days off and enjoy the ocean.”

“Oh, as nice as that sounds, there’s no way.” She said with a sense of irrevocability in her voice.

I paused for a few more songs, to give her time to, hopefully, lose blunt candor to my impossible notion. After we passed our normal access point to the beach and given
my abrupt halt in conversation, she turned to me and said, “Where are we going?” To that, I simply said, “We’re staying at the beach for a week; just you and me!”

I still remember her face and the first word out of her mouth, “NO!” I knew I would face some resistance, so as I pulled into the parking garage of the condo, I proudly stated, “I’m kidnapping you for these next week, and THIS is where we’ll be staying”

“I can’t! Thank you very much – you’re sweet for trying to do all this for me, but we can’t.” I could see her heels being pushed through the floorboards. “Yes, we can – really we can.” I tried to reason. “No, it won’t work.” She protested. “Why?” I said.

And then she went on to give all of her reasons, “I’ve got 4 appointments this week.” “Taken care of,” I said quickly.

“I’ve got a meeting on Thursday,”

“Pushed to next week,” I replied.

“I have no clothes here,” she pleaded.

“Your suitcase is in the trunk. Nicole packed it for you,” I said, thinking that should make me a few points. “Come on, let’s at least go look at the place,” I coaxed.

The whole ride up the elevator I could tell she was still trying to think of words to say that would get her out of this predicament. As I ushered her into the room with a full ocean view from literally everywhere in the condo, still all she could focus on was her desperate situation.

Now, perhaps, with a little insensitivity, I prodded, “So what do you think? Isn’t this nice?” – fishing for at least a smile.

“Vote!” She blurted. “I have to vote!” It was November, and the polls were going to be open the next day.

“True,” I conceded. “I didn’t think of that. Okay, we’ll go back to vote, and then we’ll come right back here.”

It took almost another two hours of her milling through her mind and her calendar to finally get to the point where she could finally say, “Okay, you’re right – this will be good, as long as we can go back and vote tomorrow.”

For some of you listening, you’re probably thinking: spouse, best friends, if you love me take note. You can kidnap me to the beach anytime you want. But I dare say that there are a whole lot more of you who are saying right now, “Tami – we know just how you feel.”
Very few of us have lives that are prepared for stopping at a moment’s notice to take an hour off for something not on our schedule – let alone a week. However, here in lies perhaps most important reason for taking on the practicing of this next spiritual discipline. Submission.

In the last two weeks Greg has been walking us through this understanding of how we go about loving others and then how it actually works to love ourselves.

Then Tami, read earlier a passage from Luke 9 – where Jesus is saying to his followers – “If anyone wants to follow me, he must deny himself.”

So how do we put this together? This practice of denying ourselves and then this other idea of loving ourselves and seeing ourselves as God sees us.

First of all, let us look at Submission and say what it is not:

Submission is not a strategy for making it about us:

I know this seems odd, but there are many times that we give way and practice a pseudo-submission to hopefully posture ourselves into getting something we want in return. There are some who “play” the martyr role in hopes that their self-sacrificing actions with earn them credit or relational leverage when the time is right.

True submission is actually just the opposite. It’s practiced in the Christian’s life for the betterment of others. It is not done for a return favor, or some kind of payoff, but merely so the lives of those people around me are made better.

Secondly, submission is not about being a doormat - those who allow themselves to be taken advantage of nauseate us at times. Sometimes we give them a pass by saying it’s their personality – we categorize them by saying that some people are just more submissive than others.

I need to make this very clear. When we talk about Biblical submission, we are not talking about a personality or a poor relational posture. We are talking about a CHOICE; a choice that we make, simply because we already understand our value in Christ. We can now put another’s needs in front of ours because we realize our lives are validated and honored. And – knowing this, we can read those passages in Ephesians and Colossians with a little more clarity.

When Paul said “Woman submit to your husbands,” notice that within the same context he was also addressing others in culturally subordinate positions: children and slaves. Paul was setting up something that was radically different from what they had known. He was calling for the slaves to live in submission to their masters,
counsel that seems somewhat unnecessary today, until we realize that the slave could obey his master without ever living in a spirit of submission.

It’s also why he chose at that time to say to these Christian masters – you too must submit and respect your servants. It was not a comment to end slavery, but it was the beginning of it. Later Paul would say to Philemon, “Accept your servant back no longer a slave but a partner in ministry.” No doubt Paul was mindful of the words that Jesus spoke years before when he described how His kingdom worked.

Matthew 23: 6-9

6 And how they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the reserved pews in the synagogue! 7 How they enjoy the deference paid them on the streets and to be called ‘Rabbi’ and ‘Master’! 8 Don’t ever let anyone call you that. For only God is your Rabbi and all of you are on the same level, as brothers. 9 And don’t address anyone here on earth as ‘Father,’ for only God in heaven should be addressed like that. 10 And don’t be called ‘Master,’ for only one is your master, even the Messiah.

So Paul here is giving those who thought they didn’t really matter in society, who were culturally and systematically powerless – he was giving them a choice. You see, subordination and submission are two very different things, just as self-denial and self-contempt are as well. When we choose to submit ourselves, because of the value we find in Jesus Christ, the life we begin to live not only takes on meaning, but it anchors more of what Jesus said about the Kingdom of Heaven being at Hand. With this choice we become participants in that revelation of Christ.

And Thirdly: Submission is not about losing our freedom: Freedom from always having to control things; Freedom from always having it our way. On the surface, this sounds quite nice—to think, “Hey, I like always having my way. I like being in control. Why would I want to give that up?”

But if we truly think about it – It’s actually just the opposite.

Have you ever stopped and wondered why Christ said to us –

Matthew 11:29

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light".

Jesus knew that our constant striving to control, to make sure that it turns out how we want it to turn out, and our seeking to have it our own way would eventually weigh down on us so heavily that we would lose the very freedom we thought we were looking for.
“Give it up,” he says – let me do the worrying; let me take your burden. Tami and I sat down that evening on the back balcony of that condo and just listened to the waves and felt the ocean breeze. She looked over at me and said, “I'm sorry, I don't do well in these situations. It just takes me some time to adjust, I'm very thankful now to be here, and I'm looking forward to a great time with you.” I just smiled, “Well good! I am too.” A few moments went by.

“I can't believe you did all of this for me, and how well you planned this so everything was cleared”

“Everything, except the voting” I piped in.

And then she said something very interesting – “I love it when I don't have to worry about the schedule, or the cooking, or even the plans for the day – I'm just feeling so free.”

It took her two hours to get there, but when it finally hit her – she realized the beauty of letting it go.

Take some time – start slow – start small – but find your window of opportunity to make it a practice to submit.

We had a wonderful three days, and she did absolutely no planning, and basically made no decisions – except of course at the voting booth.