



Streams of the Christian Faith

"There are different kinds of gifts, but they are all from the same Spirit. There are different ways to serve but the same Lord to serve. And there are different ways that God works through people but the same God. God works in all of us in everything we do". —1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (NCV)

There is a strong propensity in our culture to celebrate diversity, focusing on the need, right or importance of being unique and different. This has extended beyond personal moral values to Christian practices and beliefs that have created great dividing streams within the Christian Community. Indeed, there streams within Christianity. These streams are each distinct and unique, but they are all complimentary of each other if we take the time to observe their influence and impact on the church we should find them an empowering raging Holy river of living life. Further, the streams (traditions) are all rooted in Christian practice and in the Living Christ. Through each of the traditions we see a different and unique picture of Christ, for He is the unity that is present in diversity, and He makes it possible to rally under the same banner of Christianity to do His good works. Priest Lake Christian Fellowship celebrates and practices each of these streams of the Christian Faith and believes that all are essential for a healthy, vibrant, growing and mature life.

Contemplative: The Prayer-Filled Life

The Contemplative Tradition seeks intimacy with God. God desires that we spend time with Him, and that we create space to allow Him to speak to our hearts. Jesus, our example, removed himself often from the pressures of the world to fellowship, pray, and obtain direction; he was strengthened by this humble submission.

The following exercises may be helpful in better understanding and experiencing this tradition:

1. ***Set aside five to ten minutes for prayer.***

Find a time in your schedule that is free of interruption. Use that time to turn your thoughts to God. You may want to read a Bible verse and meditate on it during that time, or you may want to spend that time lifting up your needs and concerns to God. The idea is simply to stop your busy activities (or not to start them) and turn your attention to God.

2. ***Spend five to ten minutes in silence.***

As mentioned above, carve out a time that is free of interruption. Use the time to be silent. Pray without words, letting the peace of silence wash over you. Two very close friends can communicate without words-try this with God. Simply enjoy his presence.

3. ***Read a selection from a devotional book.***

Find a book you are interested in that deals with the spiritual life. It may be a spiritual classic, like St. Augustine's *Confessions*, or it may be a devotional classic, like Oswald Chambers' *My Utmost for His Highest*. However, instead of just reading it as a means to understanding it, read it "with God," knowing that God is there in the room with you! Read it as a means of discovering God.

4. ***Pray using a verse of Scripture for ten minutes.***

There is a tradition in the Eastern Church called "hesychasm," which is the practice of repeating a simple prayer over and over. The idea is to focus our thoughts on God so that God may descend into our heart. A verse from a psalm is an excellent idea: "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Ps. 51).

5. ***Write out a prayer.***

Take time to sit down and write out your prayer. Write it as if it were a "letter to God." Beginning with "Dear God," go on to tell God your hopes and dreams, tell him what you are worried about and what you need from him. You may even want to confess your sins and seek his pardon. Most importantly, use the exercise as a means of opening up the lines of communication with God. Do not write it as something that will one day be read by others. Like a personal diary, your prayer journal should be private in order to allow you the freedom to be honest.

6. ***Read the Scriptures with the Holy Spirit.***

The Holy Spirit opens our minds when we read the Bible, making us receptive to its message. In particular, the Spirit helps us to read the text for what it is saying to us personally, applying its message to our particular situation. Sit down with your Bible and select a passage to reflect upon. As you read, pray that the Holy Spirit will highlight a particular verse or word that is specifically meant for you to hear. When you have determined what the word God is wants you to hear, spend ten to fifteen minutes reflecting on why it has struck you and what it is you are needing to understand.



Streams of the Christian Faith

"There are different kinds of gifts, but they are all from the same Spirit. There are different ways to serve but the same Lord to serve. And there are different ways that God works through people but the same God. God works in all of us in everything we do". —1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (NCV)

There is a strong propensity in our culture to celebrate diversity, focusing on the need, right or importance of being unique and different. This has extended beyond personal moral values to Christian practices and beliefs that have created great dividing streams within the Christian Community. Indeed, there streams within Christianity. These streams are each distinct and unique, but they are all complimentary of each other if we take the time to observe their influence and impact on the church we should find them an empowering raging Holy river of living life. Further, the streams (traditions) are all rooted in Christian practice and in the Living Christ. Through each of the traditions we see a different and unique picture of Christ, for He is the unity that is present in diversity, and He makes it possible to rally under the same banner of Christianity to do His good works. Priest Lake Christian Fellowship celebrates and practices each of these streams of the Christian Faith and believes that all are essential for a healthy, vibrant, growing and mature life.

Holiness: The Virtuous Life

The Holiness Tradition emphasizes individual and corporate human response to God's grace: Individually in that because of God's promises we should live our lives in such a way that brings Him honor and corporately in that we encourage one another to Glorify God and bear witness to the world

The following exercises may be helpful in better understanding and experiencing this tradition:

1. ***Pray that the Holy Spirit purify your heart and mind and then listen.***

God works from the inside out, and he works via the Holy Spirit to bring about change. Set aside some time, maybe one hour for a deep and heartfelt prayer. During that time, ask God to purify your heart and mind by the working of his Holy Spirit. The key to the effectiveness of your prayer will be your willingness to surrender the control of your life to God. Ask God to search your heart to see if there is any hidden evil in your life, any activity that God wishes for you to cease doing. Then listen. When you have a sense of what it is God wants to free you from, pray that the Spirit will purge that sin -- even the desire for it-from your life. Holiness is born in these kinds of prayers.

2. ***Respond to temptation with the Word of God.***

Jesus overcame the temptations of Satan by holding fast to the truth of God's commandments. Memorize Jesus' responses (Deut. 8:3; 6:16; 6:13). When you are tempted to (1) gratify selfish desires, (2) doubt God's power, or (3) seek idols such as wealth, power, or fame, respond to the temptation with the corresponding verse of Scripture. Just like Jesus, we can use the Word of God to defeat Satan.

3. ***Nurture the growth of the fruit of the Spirit.***

Galatians 5:22 lists nine virtues called the fruit of the Spirit. They are love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, meekness, faithfulness, and self-control. They are listed in contrast to the works of the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit is produced in our lives as we choose to live by the Spirit and be guided by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). Take fifteen minutes to meditate on the list of the fruit of the Spirit. Ask God to show you which of these virtues needs to be more evident in your life. As you persevere in seeking God with a heart ready to obey, look for opportunities God may put in your path. You will soon find the fruit will blossom and grow in your life.

4. ***Try a twenty-four hour fast.***

Jesus fasted in the wilderness to gain spiritual strength. When we fast, we are saying "no" to the uncontrolled appetites of our body and thereby gaining mastery over them. The practice of fasting will also reveal hidden things about us: short tempers, selfishness, inability to delay gratification, and so on. These things can become areas for future rehabilitation. A simple way to begin fasting is to fast from lunch to lunch, skipping dinner and breakfast in between. After lunch, you will not eat a full meal until lunchtime tomorrow. During these twenty-four hours drink plenty of water, and during the mealtimes you may wish to drink a glass of fruit juice.

5. ***Read a book on Holiness to glean other encouraging exercises.***

There are many books to encourage Holiness. Some examples: Thomas A'Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*, Brother Lawrence's *The Practice of the Presence of God*, or the early "Discipline of the Methodist Church" which outlined the rules and history of the early Methodist movement and their quest for holiness.



Streams of the Christian Faith

"There are different kinds of gifts, but they are all from the same Spirit. There are different ways to serve but the same Lord to serve. And there are different ways that God works through people but the same God. God works in all of us in everything we do". —1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (NCV)

There is a strong propensity in our culture to celebrate diversity, focusing on the need, right or importance of being unique and different. This has extended beyond personal moral values to Christian practices and beliefs that have created great dividing streams within the Christian Community. Indeed, there streams within Christianity. These streams are each distinct and unique, but they are all complimentary of each other if we take the time to observe their influence and impact on the church we should find them an empowering raging Holy river of living life. Further, the streams (traditions) are all rooted in Christian practice and in the Living Christ. Through each of the traditions we see a different and unique picture of Christ, for He is the unity that is present in diversity, and He makes it possible to rally under the same banner of Christianity to do His good works. Priest Lake Christian Fellowship celebrates and practices each of these streams of the Christian Faith and believes that all are essential for a healthy, vibrant, growing and mature life.

Charismatic: The Spirit-Empowered Life

The Charismatic Tradition emphasizes God's Spirit empowering the Christian life. It seeks to recognize God's supernatural and intimate dealings with each individual. This tradition strives to see God's work actively living in the individual and in the world. Engaging in this stream will challenge the believer to hear the Spirit and to trust his guidance, to allow one's faith to be built up by God as he challenges and stretches us in ways we do not understand.

First: Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit.

If you are a Christian and love the Lord, God has promised you the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is your Advocate, our Teacher, our Comforter; He convicts you of sin, and confirms your heart when you are doing what God wants; He is your guide to weed out falsehood, and confirms truth, and He empowers you to do what God asks you to do. Throughout the Book of Acts the believers asked God for the Holy Spirit to endure hardship, to be bold, or for direction on how to proceed, and over and over God continually filled them with His Spirit. If you have never asked for God's gift of the Spirit, before proceeding with any of the exercises below, find a mature believer, and together ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit.

Then: The following exercises may be helpful in better understanding and experiencing this tradition:

1. Ask the Spirit to show you the Truth about your life before God: Is God pleased with you?

Spend time in prayer this week, specifically asking for the Spirit to begin working in your life in a new and powerful way. Set aside 15-20 minutes each night for this exercise. Remember, you are seeking God. Make no demands; have no expectations. Your only task is to surrender yourself to God. In doing so, you are opening the door for the Spirit to come in and begin making a change in the way you think and live. Ask God to thwart Satan's efforts to deceive you, and to show you the truth about your life. This may lead to a time of confession to God, or you may be blessed with a time of joy as God confirms that He is pleased with you.

2. Find out your spiritual gifts.

I Corinthians 12:8-11 lists nine of the many gifts of the Spirit: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working miracles, prophecy, discernment, speaking in tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. The Church needs these gifts. In prayer or with a mature believer, ask God to reveal which gifts He wants to use in you, and then look this week for God to give you opportunity to use your gift. Be willing to step out in faith, and even to look foolish so God's power might be manifested. God is pleased with childlike acts of faith.

3. Take personal time to worship and praise God.

The Spirit of God desires to praise and glorify Him. It is sometimes awkward to the natural man/woman to sing praises to God outside the normal worship service. Take the time to sing praises to God while you are driving, or at home, or with your family. Don't be embarrassed to sing out or to praise him. You can be assured that if you feel the urging to praise God, it is His Spirit in you prompting you, so go ahead and cooperate with the Spirit and cry out! God inhabits the praises of His people, and He is pleased when we cooperate with His Spirit.

4. Listen to the Advocate when making decisions.

Those who are children of God are led by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:14). One of the most important ministries of the Spirit is to provide guidance in our lives. Are you facing important decisions? Seek the Spirit-your Advocate-in making your decisions. Here's how: take your concern to God in prayer. Ask that you be given some direction, some insight, some leading, in the matter. It may be an intuitive sense, it



may be a word given from a friend that you sense is God's will, or it may be the opening or closing of a door of opportunity. In all decisions, test the Spirit by examining the Scriptures. The Spirit of God will bear fruit of righteousness, and will never lead you into a decision that is contrary to the principles and commandments in the Bible.

5. ***Pay attention to the promptings of the Spirit.***

God's desire is for our good. He wants to lead us and keep us from evil. The Spirit helps our weaknesses, and if we pay attention, He will keep us from falling into our enemy's traps. Intuition, and inkling, a hunch, gut feel, or sometimes tingling sensations are some ways the Spirit prompts us. Listen to God's Spirit this week. Pay attention to your inklings. We know the Spirit of God by His fruit (Gal. 5:22 ff), so don't be afraid to step out and trust God. Tell others about your experiences at the end of the week.



Streams of the Christian Faith

"There are different kinds of gifts, but they are all from the same Spirit. There are different ways to serve but the same Lord to serve. And there are different ways that God works through people but the same God. God works in all of us in everything we do". —1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (NCV)

There is a strong propensity in our culture to celebrate diversity, focusing on the need, right or importance of being unique and different. This has extended beyond personal moral values to Christian practices and beliefs that have created great dividing streams within the Christian Community. Indeed, there streams within Christianity. These streams are each distinct and unique, but they are all complimentary of each other if we take the time to observe their influence and impact on the church we should find them an empowering raging Holy river of living life. Further, the streams (traditions) are all rooted in Christian practice and in the Living Christ. Through each of the traditions we see a different and unique picture of Christ, for He is the unity that is present in diversity, and He makes it possible to rally under the same banner of Christianity to do His good works. Priest Lake Christian Fellowship celebrates and practices each of these streams of the Christian Faith and believes that all are essential for a healthy, vibrant, growing and mature life.

Social Justice: The Compassionate Life

The Social Justice Tradition is chiefly concerned with how we treat one another. It takes the Golden Rule seriously. As Jesus loved us so are we to love one another—poor, rich, abandoned, family-oriented, innocent, guilty, widow, married, divorced, homosexual, leader, sex offender, child, pastor, African-American, Caucasian—everyone. We cannot ignore the cries of the poor, abandoned, or innocent. A call of the church is to rise to their aid.

The following exercises may be helpful in better understanding and experiencing this tradition:

1. ***Write a kind and encouraging letter.***

Have you ever been blessed by this kind expression? This may seem a small task, but it can do wonders. Take time to sit down and write a letter that tells someone how important he or she has been to you. We seldom let people know how much they are appreciated. Perhaps you know of someone who is struggling over something. Write a letter that lets them know you care and that you are available if they need to talk.

2. ***Spend an afternoon at a local food bank or a crisis pregnancy center.***

Urban ministry organizations are always in need of a helping hand. Look in the phone book, or ask someone at your church, for the nearest food bank or right to life organization. Call them and ask if there is anything you can do for them. A few hours of your time will be greatly appreciated.

3. ***Engage in the service of guarding the reputation of others.***

Though we cannot see it, the reputation of others is a valuable possession. We can guard and protect it by refusing to engage in gossip or backbiting. Paul urged us to "speak evil of no one" (Titus 3:2). In addition, we can stop the poison of criticism by holding our tongue when others are engaging in slanderous talk. Our silence can work wonders in getting others to realize the injurious nature of their words. In so doing, we have protected a valuable possession of our friend: his or her reputation.

4. ***Look for injustices and address them.***

If we open our eyes, we will begin to see areas in our home, workplace, or society that are unjust. Our first task is to examine ourselves to make sure we are not looking for the speck in someone else's eye and overlooking the two-by-four in our own (Matt. 7:3-5). In other words, we must first ask ourselves, "Am I doing something that oppresses someone else?" We should look for ways we might be taking advantage of someone, abusing their kindness, or stifling their growth through our prejudices. After a thorough self-examination we are better able to look at the injustices we see around us. We should always avoid judging or condemning or advising people as to their problem, but if we are true to the task of addressing injustices, we will—at some point—need to let our concerns be known. For example, if someone in our workplace is doing something unethical (say, not telling customers the truth about a product), it would be wise to bring this up with our coworker in a calm, tactful, and no accusatory manner. Remember, the goal is not to condemn but to see that justice is established.

5. ***Practice service in secret.***

Do a kind deed for someone, like picking up litter on the highway, or sweeping your neighbors drive, but in secret, without anyone else knowing. What we do in secret will be shouted from the housetops. God knows what we do in secret. How much better to be found doing good.



Streams of the Christian Faith

"There are different kinds of gifts, but they are all from the same Spirit. There are different ways to serve but the same Lord to serve. And there are different ways that God works through people but the same God. God works in all of us in everything we do". —1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (NCV)

There is a strong propensity in our culture to celebrate diversity, focusing on the need, right or importance of being unique and different. This has extended beyond personal moral values to Christian practices and beliefs that have created great dividing streams within the Christian Community. Indeed, there streams within Christianity. These streams are each distinct and unique, but they are all complimentary of each other if we take the time to observe their influence and impact on the church we should find them an empowering raging Holy river of living life. Further, the streams (traditions) are all rooted in Christian practice and in the Living Christ. Through each of the traditions we see a different and unique picture of Christ, for He is the unity that is present in diversity, and He makes it possible to rally under the same banner of Christianity to do His good works. Priest Lake Christian Fellowship celebrates and practices each of these streams of the Christian Faith and believes that all are essential for a healthy, vibrant, growing and mature life.

Evangelical: The Word-Centered Life

The Evangelical Tradition emphasizes two important areas of Christian life: the centrality of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16) and the importance of personal witness or evangelism (Matthew 28:19). This tradition strives to allow the written word of God to shape and mold the life of the believer, and to fulfill the Great Commission. Engaging in this stream will demand attention and application of the written word in the life of the believer, and engaging the world with what God has done personally in the life of the believer.

The following exercises may be helpful in better understanding and experiencing this tradition:

1. ***Meditate on a short section of the Bible.***

Meditation is a tool that aids in understanding the scripture and applying it in our lives. Take a simple selection, such as Psalm 32. Allow twenty minutes or so to read it slowly and carefully. Pause after each sentence and reflect on it. Ask questions: What does that phrase mean? What might God be telling me about himself? about me? about others? If a particular word or phrase strikes you, spend additional time reflecting on it. Look at the same verse in different translations. Does the additional translation give new insights? Change your previous insights? How can I apply this to my life?

2. ***Memorize a verse of Scripture.***

Memorization is a powerful tool in allowing the word to have access to our thought life. Select a verse you are unfamiliar with, maybe one that you recently found while meditating on God's word which spoke to you. It is easiest to memorize the verse one phrase at a time until you are able to repeat the whole verse from memory. As you go throughout your day, repeat it to yourself often.

3. ***Read one of the shorter books of the Bible out loud.***

The Gospels, and even Paul's letters, were read aloud to the early Christians, who gathered as a community. Experience how the first Christians experienced the written words. Take one of Paul's letters (for example, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Titus) and read it out loud to yourself. Imagine how the audience of Christians listening to it for the first time would have reacted.

4. ***Develop your own personal testimony of God's work in your life.***

The best way to evangelize is to share what God has done in your life. Taking the time to think about this in advance will give you words to say should God provide the opportunity to share with others. Write it out. How did you come to find God? What made you decide to become a Christian? Why? How has God worked in your life since you decided to follow Him? What things have you learned that might be helpful to others?

5. ***Look for an opportunity to tell someone about your faith.***

Prayer precedes these opportunities, so begin by praying that God will put you in contact with someone who needs to hear about Jesus. Ask that you be given some means of knowing when it is the right person and the right time and when it is not. When you are asked what you are doing, or how things are going, gently begin speaking about how your faith is central to your life. Do not speak in such a way that the person feels that he or she is being judged or manipulated. Simply witness to what has happened to you and let that word go forth in honesty and simplicity.



6. ***Evangelize by your actions.***

St. Francis reminds us, "Always preach Christ; use words when necessary." This week let your actions speak for you. As you encounter different people, pay particular attention to your actions and what they are conveying. The fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, and soon) is a tremendous witness to the power of God. When people see us exercise these virtues, they will instinctively want to know what makes us "different." Before beginning, pray for the insight to see certain areas of your life as others see them. By the end of this exercise you should be able to pick out areas of your life that speak well of Christ and others that will need some change.



Streams of the Christian Faith

"There are different kinds of gifts, but they are all from the same Spirit. There are different ways to serve but the same Lord to serve. And there are different ways that God works through people but the same God. God works in all of us in everything we do". —1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (NCV)

There is a strong propensity in our culture to celebrate diversity, focusing on the need, right or importance of being unique and different. This has extended beyond personal moral values to Christian practices and beliefs that have created great dividing streams within the Christian Community. Indeed, there streams within Christianity. These streams are each distinct and unique, but they are all complimentary of each other if we take the time to observe their influence and impact on the church we should find them an empowering raging Holy river of living life. Further, the streams (traditions) are all rooted in Christian practice and in the Living Christ. Through each of the traditions we see a different and unique picture of Christ, for He is the unity that is present in diversity, and He makes it possible to rally under the same banner of Christianity to do His good works. Priest Lake Christian Fellowship celebrates and practices each of these streams of the Christian Faith and believes that all are essential for a healthy, vibrant, growing and mature life.

Incarnational: The Sacramental Life

The Incarnational (Liturgical) Tradition seeks to use rituals to identify with Christianity as practiced through the ages. The history, prayer books, creeds, and structures offer stability and demonstrate a form of worship from which faithful believers have consistently honored God throughout the ages. We are creatures of habit, and developing good habits will keep us on the right path.

The following exercises may be helpful in better understanding and experiencing this tradition:

1. ***Borrow a Book of Prayer from a friend, and review it.***

The Book of Common Prayer (Episcopal), The Common Service Book of the Lutheran Church, Discipline of the Methodist Church, and others offer wonderful prayers, and liturgical forms and sometimes history of these movements within the Christ's Church. Obtain one of these books, and read the liturgical forms, the rules of life, the prayers. How does your life compare to the tenants and spirit contained therein. Where does your practice differ? Where is it the same?

2. ***Participate in the Sacraments: Have you been baptized?***

Baptism of the believer has been practiced since the time of Christ. When we are buried (immersed) in the waters of baptism, we are giving external evidence to men of our commitment to Christ. Since the earliest times believers who decide to follow Christ participate in this sacrament. If you as a believer have never been baptized as an adult, talk to your pastor and take steps to do so.

3. ***Participate in the Sacraments: Study the Eucharist.***

Many people take the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper, and have never studied what it is all about. Jesus established the Lord's Supper in the upper room just before his crucifixion, and asked his followers to remember him in this way until he comes again. Most believe the establishment of the Lord's Supper was part of the ancient Jewish celebration of Passover. Christ, identifying himself with the Passover lamb, then went to the cross to redeem mankind. One approach would be to study the Passover and what the emblems mean. Another approach would be look at what Scripture claims regarding the Lord's Table, the Bread, and the Wine. Understanding what the Eucharist has meant to Christians of the past can give greater clarity and purposefulness to our observance of this sacrament.

4. ***Study the Creeds: Read the Apostles Creed every day this week.***

There is a comfort in the history of the past. If you have not done SO recently, read the Apostle's Creed daily this week. These tenants are considered by most Christians to be the core of the gospel, faithfulness to which defines a true believer.

5. ***Look at an old Hymn Book.***

Take time to read several old hymns this week. What are the writers communicating? Is it consistent with the basics of your faith? Identifying in this way with Christians from past generations gives us confidence that the path we are on is truly The Way. Some hymns of the past speak of things that might be foreign to us. Do the hymns speak of things that make us uncomfortable? Where are the differences? Sometimes when we explore the differences we learn new truths that can challenge us and strengthen our faith. As always, we must confirm the truths we learn with The Truth: God's Word as revealed by His Spirit.



6. ***Create a new Christian tradition in your family/life.***

It might be an ancient tradition such setting aside time each week to teach your children God's ways, or committing to nightly prayers. Choosing to take a Sabbath rest one day a week is an excellent, scriptural, tradition that dates back to the patriarchs. What tradition can you institute in your family that will honor God? Some people pray before every meal to honor Him, others take time to read God's word daily. Whatever you choose to do, by doing all to glorify God, you will be establishing good habits that will enrich your life as well as the lives of others who observe your behavior.