

A Fivefold Path to Practical Spirituality

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July 22nd, 2007

1. Introduction

- The problem of belief-behavior gap
- Traditional solutions
- Lessons from Buddhism

2. A fivefold path to spirituality

- Stretching exercises I and II
- Fivefold Path Diagram I and II
- What is practical spirituality?

3. Worshipping ABBA Father

- Focusing, Opening, Offering, Listening, Receiving

Introduction

Problem of the belief-behavior gap

- Christians are God's new creations
- Barna Research Group's findings
- Pastors' frustration with the lack of life change
- Strong in evangelism but weak in transformation

Traditional evangelical solutions

- Sunday worship
- Wednesday prayer meeting
- Involvement in church ministry
- Personal daily devotion

Solutions that have not worked

- More Bible and theology training
- More faith in God and His grace
- More church-involvement
- More prayer
- More love in action

Too much emphasis on faith and grace

- Let God shape our lives
- Let the Spirit produce the spiritual fruit in us
- Let go and let God
- His grace is all sufficient & faith is the answer
- Where is human responsibility?
- What do we do to get connected with God?

Need a deeper understanding of faith and grace

- **James: 2:20-21**

“Foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?”

- **Michael Green:**

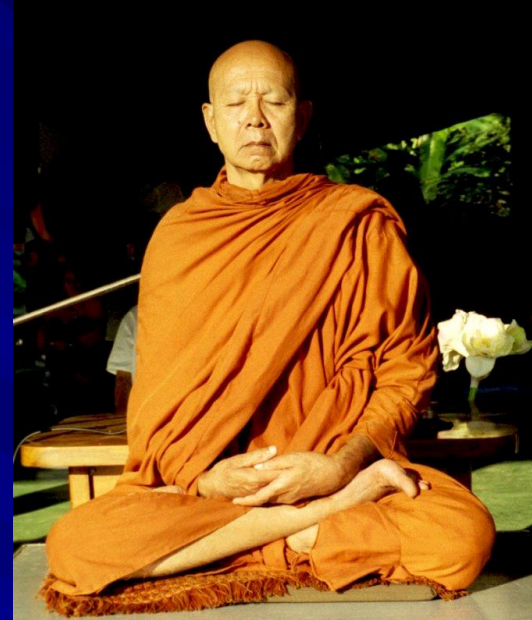
“Grace means ‘all of him for me.’ Faith means ‘all of me for him’....Grace is costly. So is faith. It calls for total surrender in practical, life-changing ways.”

A comparison of three faith traditions

- Buddhism has its Zen masters
- Roman Catholics have their saints and mystics
- Evangelical Christians have their evangelists and CEOs

Snapshots of Zen masters

- A Zen Master practicing mindful meditation
- The beneficial effects of mindful meditation
- Physiological changes in the brain



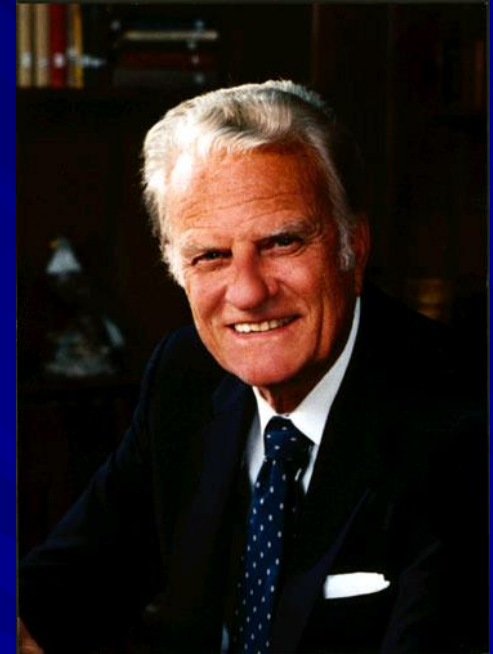
Snapshots of Catholic Spiritual Giants

- Saint Francis of Assisi
- Thomas Merton
- Henri Nouwen



Snapshots of Christian leaders

- Billy Graham
- Joel Osteen
- Lakewood Church



Buddhism

- Buddhism has gained recognition
- Buddhists are called devotees
- The Four Noble Truths
- Enlightenment and compassion are the two pillars of Buddhism
- Focus on spiritual discipline

The Four Noble Truths

1. Life means suffering
2. The origin of suffering is attachment
3. The cessation of suffering is attainable
4. The eightfold path to Nirvana

The Eightfold Path

1. Right View	Wisdom
2. Right Intention	
3. Right Speech	Ethical Conduct
4. Right Action	
5. Right Livelihood	
6. Right effort	Mental Development
7. Right Mindfulness	
8. Right concentration	



Lessons I have learned from Buddhism

- Speaking at Buddhist universities & conferences



- Integrating physical exercises with spiritual exercises

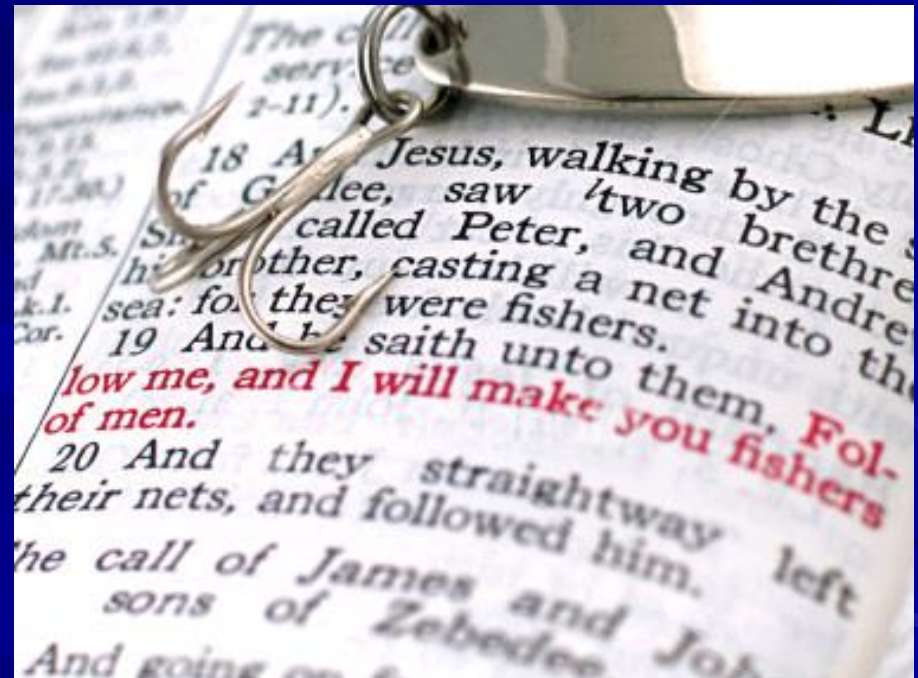


- Learning meditation from a Zen Master



A fivefold path to practical spirituality

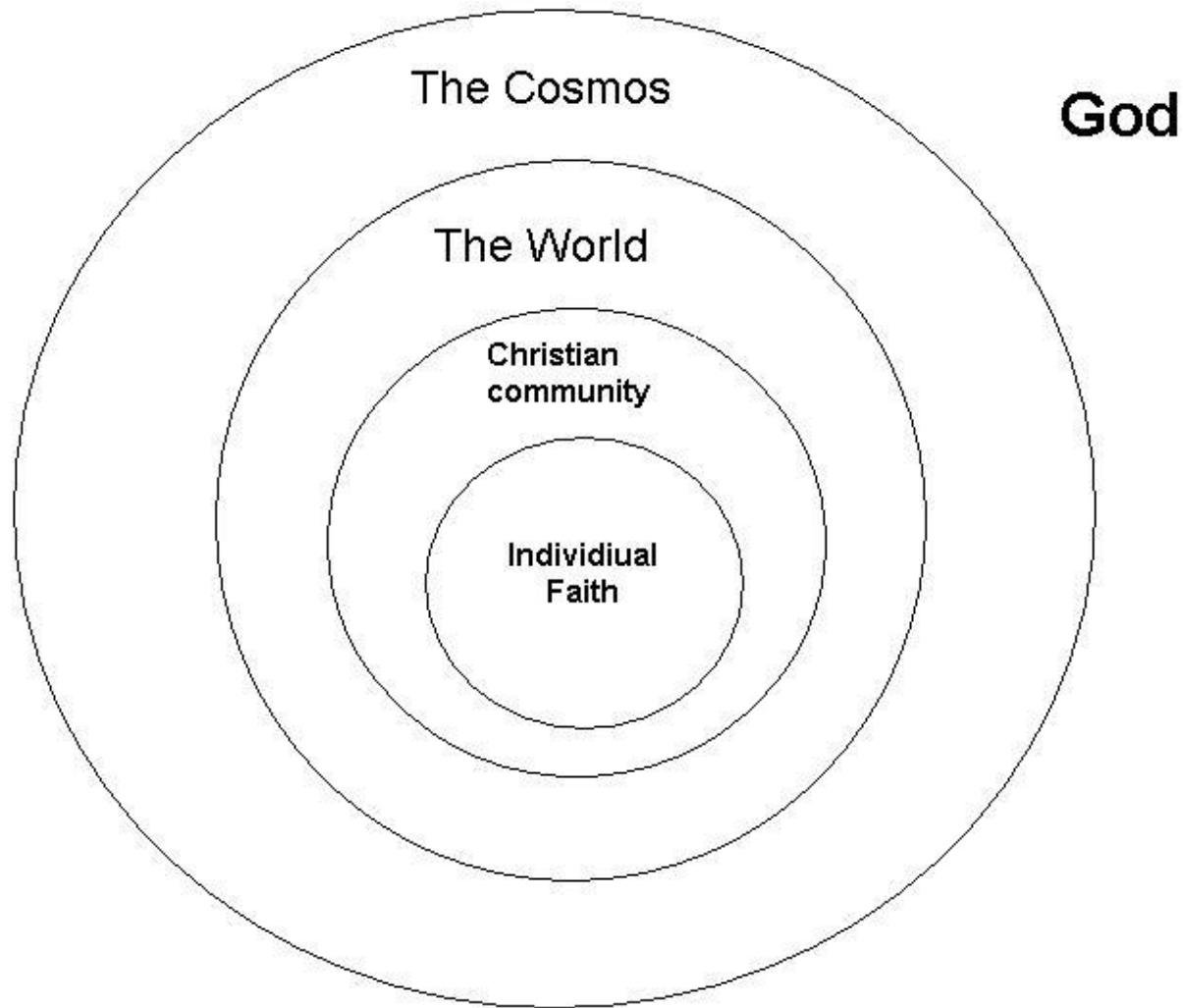
1. Upward –
Worshipping the
Father
2. Downward – Serving
the Son
3. Outward – Loving the
neighbors
4. Forward – Walking in
the Spirit
5. Inward – Meditating
on God's Word



What is practical spirituality?

- New Testament spirituality is very practical
- The fivefold path incorporates the major spiritual traditions in Christianity
- It integrates the body, mind and the spirit
- It finds an inner spiritual center as the basis for stretching and reaching out

- The fivefold path is not a solitary journey



Stretching Exercises (I)

- With eyes half-closed
- With your inner eyes wide open



1. Looking up
2. Looking down
3. Looking around (left and right)
4. Looking forward
5. Looking inward

Stretching Exercises (II)

- **Firmly grounded and centered**
 - **With eyes half-closed**
1. Stretching upward
 2. Stretching downward
 3. Swinging around (left and right)
 4. Stretching forward
 5. Sitting down straight



Diagram I

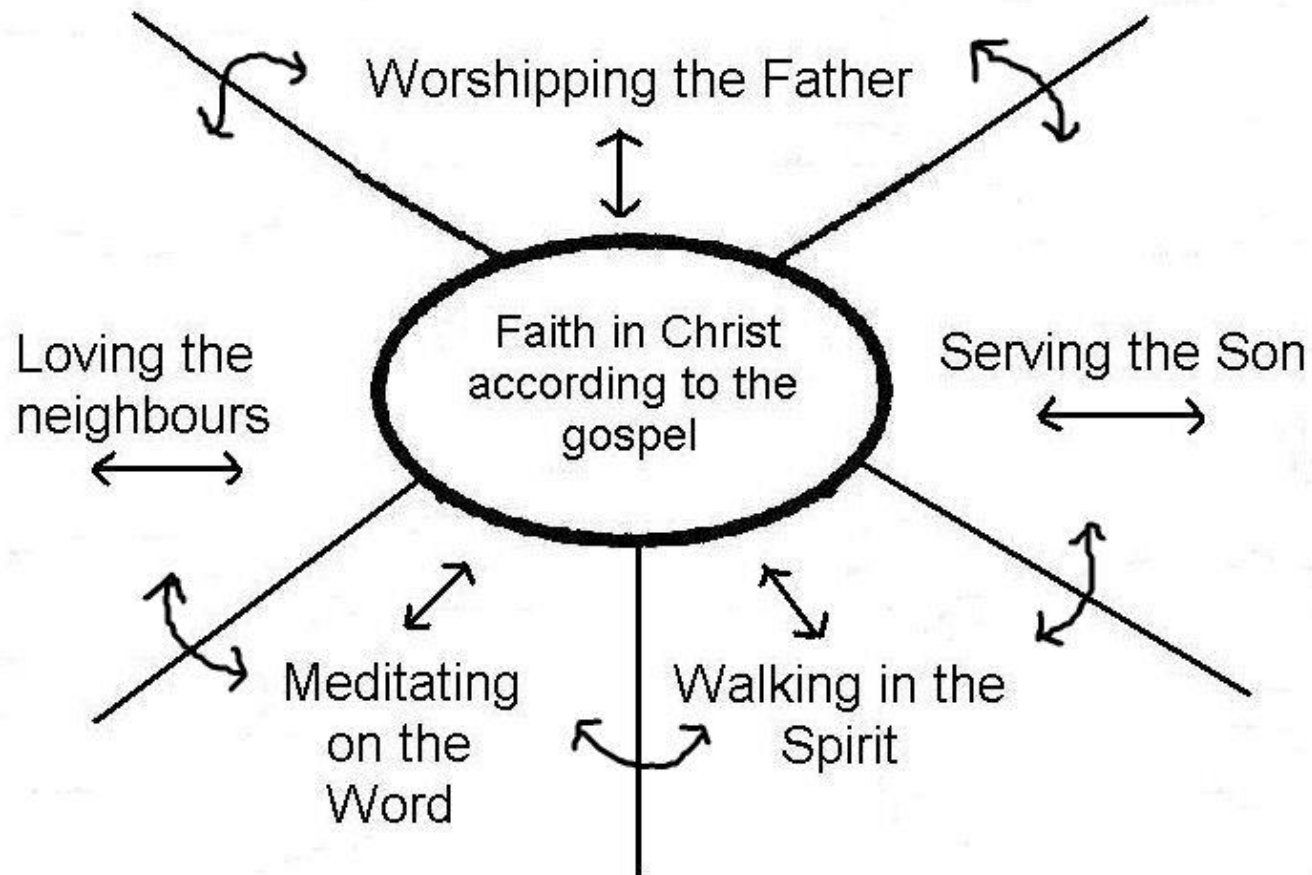
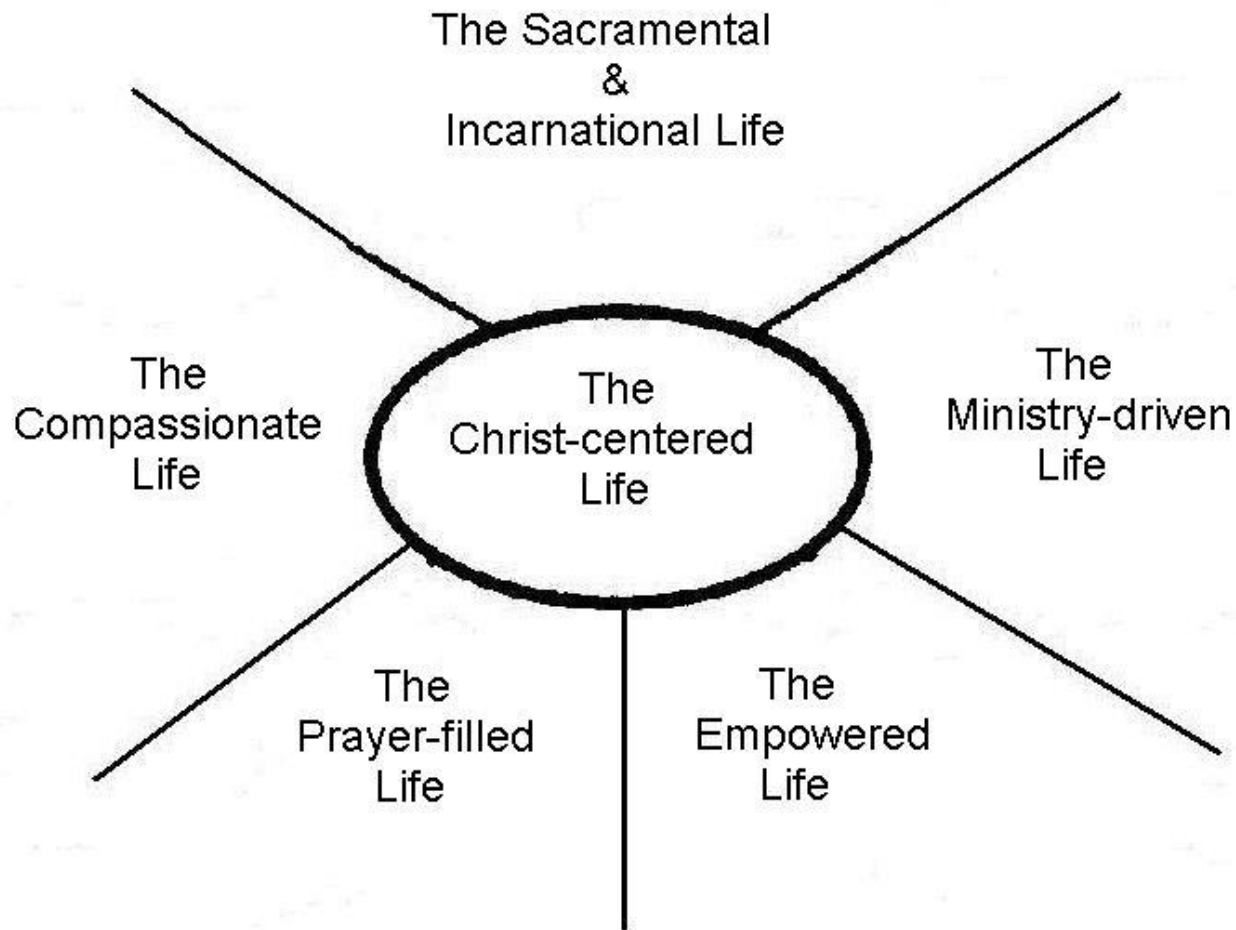


Diagram II



Adapted from *"Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith"* by Richard J. Foster.

The Worshipping Exercises



1. Focusing on God
2. Opening to God
3. Offering to God
4. Listening to God
5. Receiving from God

The meaning of worship

- Worship is at the heart of Christian spirituality
- Christians are ABBA worshippers
- We worship the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit
- Worship and life should not be separated

Deeper understanding of worship

Romans 8:15

- For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Romans 12:1

- Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

The Focusing Exercises

1. Visual – Icon, candle
2. Tactile – Rosary, crucifix
3. Verbal – Mantra
4. Breathing
5. Sensing
6. God and His Word



Exercises of Opening to God:



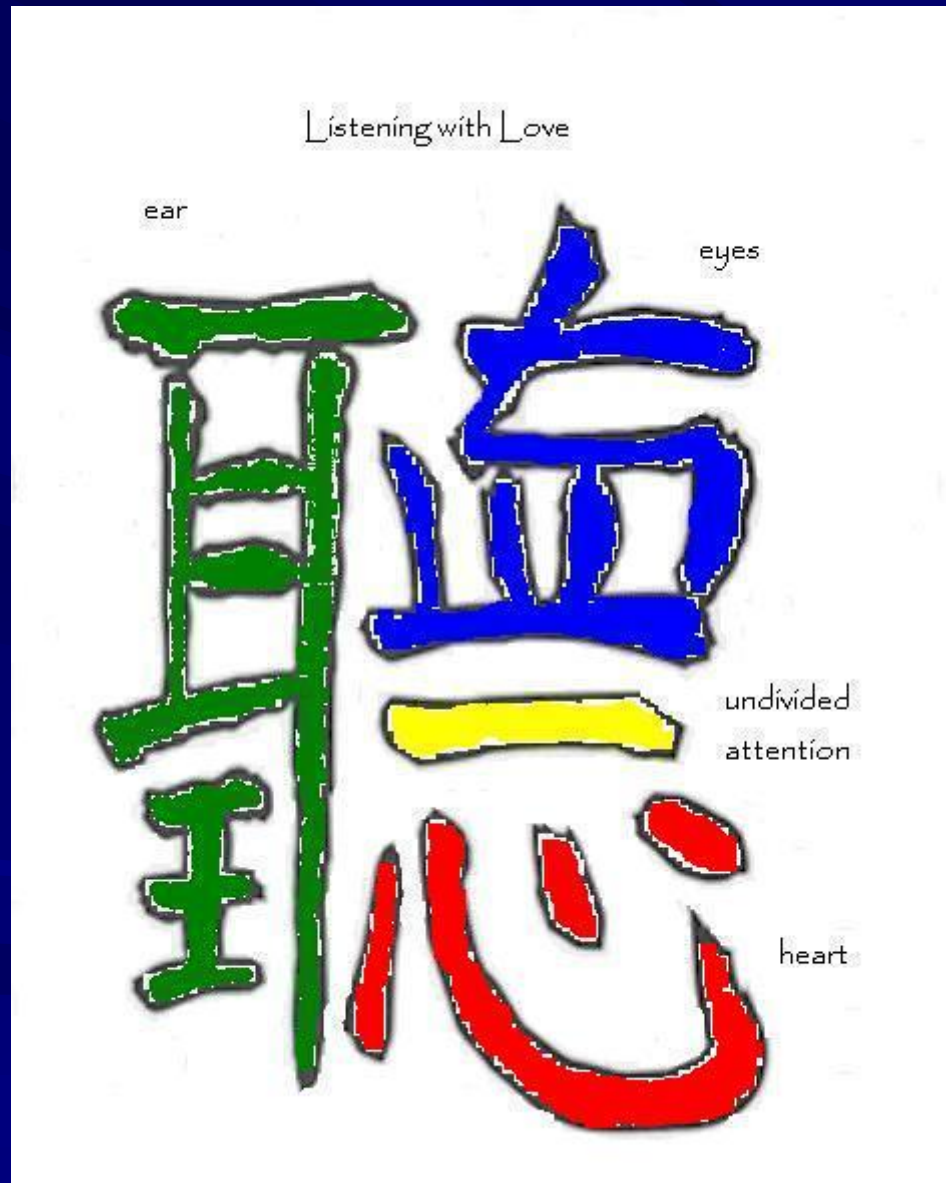
1. Open my hands that I may let go and let be
2. Open my eyes that I may see your wonders
3. Open my mind that I may understand your mysteries
4. Open my heart that it may be overflowing with God's love
5. Open my life that it may be filled with the Holy Spirit

The Offering Exercises

1. Offering songs of praises and celebration
2. Offering my each day and each hour
3. Offering all my brokenness and fears
4. Offering all my hopes and aspirations
5. Offering all my possessions
6. Offering my life as a living sacrifice



Levels of listening:



1. With our ears
2. With our eyes
3. With our head
4. With our heart
5. With our Spirit

Listening Exercises:

1. Your inner voice
(reflective listening)
2. The spoken words
(active listening)
3. The unspoken words
(imaginative listening)
4. The Word of God
(instructive listening)
5. The still small voice
(contemplative
listening)



Exercises in Receiving from God



1. The fullness of God's presence
2. The grace for my needs
3. The healing for my brokenness
4. The fullness of Christ
5. The fullness of the Holy Spirit