

chapter 3: developing a heart for God



“A discipline for the spiritual life is, when the dust of history is blown away, nothing but an activity undertaken to bring us into more effective cooperation with Christ and His Kingdom.”

— Dallas Willard,
The Spirit of the Disciplines

God is pleased when our hearts are filled with love for Him and love for our neighbors. These are the most important marks of spiritual maturity. God uses spiritual disciplines to help bring us to the point where our daily choices reflect this kind of love.

We won't attempt to discuss every discipline listed in the box below, but we will highlight a few that are central to your education at Cedarville. All students are encouraged to practice these disciplines, and in some cases parts of the Cedarville experience are required to help students develop certain key disciplines.

Disciplines of Worship and Study

The disciplines of worship and study focus our minds on God and His Word. These disciplines help to direct our minds and characters toward things that have

virtue and away from things that are vices. Listed below are a few activities or programs that promote these disciplines.

Personal Bible Study

Students are encouraged to develop and maintain the discipline of personal Bible study and to become familiar with important books about spiritual growth, both classic and contemporary.

Chapel and Bible Conferences

Chapel is a defining part of the Cedarville experience. The emphasis placed upon chapel has become one of Cedarville's distinctives. The chapel experience includes worship, preaching, testimonies, fellowship, prayer, and celebration. It is one of the most powerful factors in building a sense of community and family at Cedarville University.

Spiritual Disciplines

The spiritual disciplines are exercises that godly people have practiced for centuries to enable us to do things spiritually that we cannot do by willpower alone. These disciplines have been compared to the training that athletes do before actually entering an athletic contest so that in the heat of the event they will do what they need to in order to win. The spiritual disciplines are things that we can choose to do that will help us develop Christian virtues and gain power to live effectively for Christ. Some of the more common spiritual disciplines are listed below.

Celebration	Sacrifice
Confession	Service
Fasting	Silence
Fellowship	Solitude
Frugality	Study
Prayer	Worship

These disciplines are not measures of our spirituality, nor are they things we do to earn God's favor. They are exercises that we can choose to do to prepare us to make virtuous choices in life that reflect a deep love for God and others.

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Students are expected to be attentive and respectful during chapel. Prohibited activities include sleeping, studying, and bringing in food or drink. Students are asked to turn off cell phones, and men are expected to remove hats as an expression of courtesy and respect.

Chapel meets each weekday, and attendance is required of all students taking more than six credit hours (attendance is taken by scanning student IDs as students enter the auditorium). Each student is allowed eight unexcused absences per semester. Excused absences are granted for illness, funerals, or direct work conflicts. Students may apply for an excused absence online within five days of the absence. Students will receive one demerit for each unexcused absence over eight. Excessive absences will result in fines, probation, suspension, and/or dismissal.

Each semester begins with a special Bible or missions conference, including both morning and evening services. Noted speakers from across the nation, including people like Alistair Begg, Voddie Baucham, and Tim Kimmel, serve as guest speakers. Typically, one day per semester is devoted to a special focus on the discipline of prayer.

Church Participation

Because fellowship within the church is so prominent in the New Testament, and because it is so important to spiritual accountability and spiritual growth, we ask students to maintain the discipline of weekly corporate worship at a local church. Students may not consistently attend a church whose major doctrinal positions are inconsistent with an evangelical understanding of the Christian faith.

Cedarville’s Position on Sign Gifts and Speaking in Tongues

By sign gifts we are referring to things like speaking in tongues, uttering new words of prophecy, or attempting to perform miraculous healings. We believe that these things happened in the early church, but that they are not meant to be a typical pattern for behavior or practice today. Because we are committed to this position, we ask students not to practice or promote these gifts on campus.

Does God Care About My Studies?

God is honored by each student’s faithfulness to his or her studies. Studying for class is an expression of good stewardship and can be an act of worship as we learn about God from His creation. According to the Community Covenant, “We covenant together to pursue excellence in all that we do as an expression of our gratitude to God and our desire to be good stewards of all God’s gifts, including our talents, time, and resources.” National studies indicate that the average full-time college student spends 48 hours per week in class or doing out-of-class homework. We recommend that students treat their studies like a full-time job, devoting at least 48 hours each week to class and study before making other time commitments. With another 50 hours spent sleeping, this leaves 70 hours for all the other activities that enrich your college experience.



“Chapels at Cedarville are an absolute blessing. It’s a time where the body of students, faculty, staff, and others can come and hear about this amazing Christ, see what He is doing in and throughout the world, and praise Him for His work and glory!

— Chris Gehman,
2009–2010 SGA Chaplain
Maytown, Pennsylvania

How Do You Encourage Participation in Church and Other Spiritual Disciplines?

Ultimately, each student is personally responsible for his or her faithfulness to spiritual disciplines like Bible study, prayer, and fellowship. However, to encourage the development of good disciplines, we ask all students once a semester, to report their practice of some of the more public disciplines. In addition, freshman and sophomore students are asked to submit an online form weekly, listing the church where they worshiped and at least two other spiritual formation activities, which could include attendance at additional church services, involvement on a Christian ministry team, participation in a discipleship group, or involvement in a personal mentoring relationship. Students can request help with their spiritual disciplines from the residence life staff. Guidelines for spiritual formation activities are available online or at the Christian ministries office in the Dixon Ministry Center.



Disciplines of Silence, Solitude, and Rest

Solitude, silence, meditation, and rest are important aids to spiritual growth. Fatigue is harmful to students both academically and spiritually. Students at Cedarville are encouraged to view rest and reflection as valuable aids to their spiritual development.

Practicing Sabbath

As a community, we protect Sunday to encourage the pattern of setting aside our work weekly to rest, refocus our attention on Jesus Christ, and renew ourselves spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally. This includes a campus-wide adjustment of the usual daily pace and schedule and an effort to encourage balanced, intentional involvement in worship, growth, and ministry. To support these efforts, the University does not schedule classes on Sundays, and we limit other types of scheduled activities. Facilities like the Stevens Student Center and the Recreation Center remain open to provide opportunities for social interaction and physical refreshment.

Disciplines of Fellowship and Celebration

God uses people to help us grow spiritually. Christian fellowship is so important that God cautions us not to turn

away from the practice of gathering together and encouraging one another. This kind of interaction is a major part of the Cedarville experience. It happens in class, in the residence halls, over meals at Chuck's (the University's dining hall), and within more than 80 student organizations. A few examples of special opportunities for fellowship and celebration are mentioned below.

Discipleship Groups

Small discipleship groups seek to create an atmosphere for spiritual growth through accountability, prayer, open discussion, and loving community. Led by upperclassmen, the groups meet once a week for a year. The meetings alternate between community-building activities and discussion of a topic. To view a listing of current or upcoming studies, please visit www.cedarville.edu/discipleship. Involvement in a discipleship small group will consistently challenge and encourage you to develop your heart for God.

Prayer Groups

Several prayer ministries function on campus under the direction of Christian ministries. In addition to encouraging the discipline of prayer, these groups provide

a forum for mutual edification and Christian fellowship. For example, the Chapel Prayer Team meets daily to seek God's blessing on the daily chapel program.

Veranda Life and Men Mentoring Men

Our students place a very high value on contact with faculty and staff outside the classroom. These two mentoring programs match students with older mentors of their own gender. Spots are available based upon the number of mentors who volunteer.

Student Government Association (SGA) Chapel

On most Fridays, SGA conducts our chapel service. These services typically include a message or devotional, contemporary worship, student videos, and lots of humor. SGA chapels have become a favorite part of most students' Cedarville experience as students celebrate the blessings of fellowship, community, service, and worship.

Concerts and Student Activities

In addition to all the events that happen on a regular basis, Cedarville also provides a wide array of events to encourage special opportunities for fellowship and celebration. Examples include Art Week, Acoustic Fire, Films That Matter, Foreign Film Series, and concerts with Christian artists like David Crowder, Third Day, Shane and Shane, Switchfoot, Casting Crowns, and Toby Mac.

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together ... but let us encourage one another.”

— Hebrews 10:24–25

