

## Celebration of Discipline 1: INTRODUCTION

Many people experience religion (the church) as an organization that's all about rules. It teaches about them, prescribes them, and tries to enforce them. Sadly, often the church has used rule keeping to define who's "in" and who's "out" of the club we call church.

1. **REMEMBERING** If you were brought up in church, what rules were emphasized there? If you weren't brought up in church, what were your impressions of the church and Christians?
2. **REFLECTING** How do you think these past experiences and impressions have impacted the way you think and feel about church? ...about God?
3. **DISCOVERING** Matthew 22:34-40 Jesus emphasizes *relationships over rules*.

*Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. <sup>35</sup>One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: <sup>36</sup>“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” <sup>37</sup>Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup>This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup>All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*

- What do you find interesting about this exchange between Jesus and his opponents?
  - In your opinion, how do loving God and loving others sum up all other rules and commands?
4. **CONNECTING** What might it look like for you to grow deeper in your relationship with Jesus and your ability to express love to Him? OR what might it look like for you to grow deeper in your relationships with others and your ability to express love to them? (Share about one.)
  5. **RESPONDING** What is one specific thing you'd be willing to pray for yourself as you begin this series on spiritual disciplines?

Pray together so you can encourage one another while you're in training in the weeks ahead.

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**There is no “quick fix” for the human condition. The approach to wholeness is for humankind a process of great length and difficulty that engages all our own powers to their fullest extent over a long course of experience. But we don't like to hear this.**

- Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*