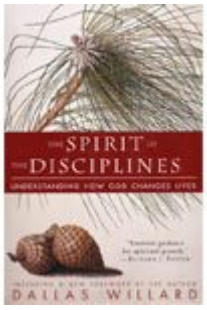
Spiritual Disciplines and the Modern World

The spiritual disciplines help us cooperate with God in our transformation into the likeness of Christ. Don Closson discusses disciplines of abstinence and of engagement.

This article is also available in Spanish.

Spirituality and the Body



As a seminary student I was given the assignment to read a book on Christian spirituality called the *Spirit of the Disciplines* by Dallas Willard.{1} I obediently read the book and either wrote a paper on it or took a test that covered the material (I can't recall which), but the book didn't have a major impact on my life at that time. Recently, over a decade later, I have gone back to the book and found it to be a jewel that I should have spent more time with. In the book, Willard speaks to one of the most important issues facing individual Christians and churches in our time: "How does one live the Spirit-filled life promised in the New Testament?" How does the believer experience the promise that Jesus made in Matthew 11:29-30: "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"?



Willard argues that modernity has given us a culture that offers a flood of self-fulfillment programs in the form of political, scientific, and even psychological revolutions. All promise to promote personal peace and affluence, and yet we suffer from an "epidemic of depression, suicide, personal emptiness, and escapism through drugs and alcohol, cultic obsession, consumerism, and sex and violence . . . ."{2} Most Christians would agree that the Christian faith offers a model for human transformation that far exceeds the promises of modern scientific programs, but when it comes to delineating the methods of such a transformation there is often confusion or silence.

Christians frequently seek spiritual maturity in all the wrong places. Some submit themselves to abusive churches that equate busyness and unquestioning subservience with Christ-likeness. Others look for spirituality through syncretism, borrowing the spiritualism of Eastern religions or Gnosticism and covering it with a Christian veneer.

According to Willard, Christians often hope to find Christ's power for living in ways that seem appropriate but miss the mark; for example, through a "sense of forgiveness and love for God" or through the acquisition of propositional truth. Some "seek it through special experiences or the infusion of the Spirit," or by way of "the presence of Christ in the inner life." Others argue that it is only through the "power of ritual and liturgy or the preaching of the Word," or "through the communion of the saints." All of these have value in the Christian life but do not "reliably produce large numbers of people who really are like Christ."{3}

We evangelicals have a natural tendency to avoid anything that hints of meritorious works, works that might somehow justify us before a holy God. As a result, we reduce faith to an entirely mental affair, cutting off the body from the process of living the Christian life.

In this article we will consider a New Testament theology of human transformation in order to better understand what it means to become a living sacrifice to God.

A Model for Transformation

Faith in Jesus Christ brings instant forgiveness along with the promise of eventual glorification and spending eternity with God. However, in between the believer experiences something called sanctification, the process of being set apart for good works. Something that is sanctified is holy, so it makes sense that the process of sanctification is to make us more like Christ.

Even though the Bible talks much of spiritual power and becoming like Christ, many believers find this process of sanctification to be a mystery. Since the Enlightenment, there has been a slow removal from our language of acceptable ways to talk about the spiritual realm. Being rooted in this age of science and materialism, the language of spiritual growth sounds alien and a bit threatening to our ears, but if we want to experience the life that Jesus promised, a life of spiritual strength, we need to understand how to appropriate God's Spirit into our lives.

According to Willard, "A 'spiritual life' consists in that range of activities in which people cooperatively interact with God—and with the spiritual order deriving from God's personality and action. And what is the result? A new overall quality of human existence with corresponding new powers."{4} To be spiritual is to be dominated by the Spirit of God. Willard adds that spirituality is another reality, not just a "commitment" or "life-style." It may result in personal and social change, but the ultimate goal is to become like Christ and to further His Kingdom, not just to be a better person or to make America a better place to live.

The Bible teaches that to become a spiritual person one must employ the *disciplines* of spirituality. “The disciplines are activities of mind and body purposefully undertaken to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order.”{5} Paul wrote in Romans 6:13 that the goal of being spiritual is to offer our body to God as instruments of righteousness in order to be of use for His Kingdom. Moving towards this state of usefulness to God and His Kingdom depends on the actions of individual believers.

Many of us have been taught that this action consists primarily in attending church or giving towards its programs. As important as these are, they fail to address the need for a radical inner change that must take place in our hearts to be of significant use to God. The teaching of Scripture and specifically the life of Christ tells us that the deep changes that must occur in our lives will only be accomplished via the disciplines of abstinence such as fasting, solitude, silence, and chastity, and the disciplines of engagement such as study, worship, service, prayer, and confession. These disciplines, along with others, will result in being conformed to the person of Christ, the desire of everyone born of His Spirit.

Salvation and Life

When I first read in the Bible that Jesus offered a more abundant life to those who followed Him, I thought that He was primarily describing a life filled with more happiness and purpose. It does include these things, but I now believe that it includes much more. Salvation in Christ promises to radically change the nature of life itself. It is not just a promise that sometime in the far distant future we will experience a resurrected body and see a new heaven and new earth. Salvation in Christ promises a life characterized by the highest ideals of thought and actions as epitomized by the life of Christ Himself.

Although there is no program or classroom course that can guarantee to give us this new life in Christ, it can be argued that in order to live a life like Jesus we need to do the things that Jesus did. If Jesus had to "learn obedience through the things which he suffered" (Hebrew 5:8 KJV), are we to expect to act Christ-like without the benefit of engaging in the disciplines that Jesus did?

In *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Willard argues that there is a direct connection between practicing the spiritual disciplines and experiencing the salvation that is promised in Christ. Jesus prayed, fasted, and practiced solitude "not because He was sinful and in need of redemption, as we are, but because he had a body just as we do."{6} The center of every human being's existence is his or her body. We are neither to be neo-Platonic nor Gnostic in our approach to the spiritual life. Both of these traditions play down the importance of the physical universe, arguing that it is either evil or simply inferior to the spiritual domain. But as Willard argues, "to withhold our bodies from religion is to exclude religion from our lives."

Although our spiritual dimension may be invisible, it is not separate from our bodily existence. *Spirituality*, according to Willard, is "a relationship of our embodied selves to God that has the natural and irrepressible effect of making us alive to the Kingdom of God—here and now in the material world."{7} By separating our Christian life from our bodies we create an unnecessary sacred/secular gulf for Christians that often alienates us from the world and people around us.

The Christian faith offers more than just the forgiveness of sins; it promises to transform individuals to live in such a way that responding to events as Jesus did becomes second nature. What are these spiritual disciplines, and how do they transform the very quality of life we experience as followers of Jesus Christ?

The Disciplines of Abstinence

Although many of us have heard horror stories of how spiritual disciplines have been abused and misused in the past, Willard believes that "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."{8} He reminds us that we discipline ourselves throughout life in order to accomplish a wide variety of tasks or functions. We utilize discipline when we study an academic or professional field; athletes must be disciplined in order to run a marathon or bench press 300 lbs. Why, then, are we surprised to learn that we must discipline ourselves to be useful to God?

Willard divides the disciplines into two categories: disciplines of abstinence, and disciplines of engagement. Depending on our lifestyle and past personal experiences, we will each find different disciplines helpful in accomplishing the goal of living as a new creature in Christ. Solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy, and sacrifice are disciplines of abstinence. Given our highly materialistic culture, these might be the most difficult and most beneficial to many of us. We are more familiar with the disciplines of engagement, including study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, and fellowship. However, two others mentioned by Willard might be less familiar: confession and submission.

Abstinence requires that we give up something that is perfectly normal—something that is not wrong in and of itself, such as food or sex—because it has gotten in the way of our walking with God, or because by leaving these things aside we might be able to focus more closely on God for a period of time. As one writer tells us, "Solitude is a terrible trial, for it serves to crack open and burst apart the shell of our superficial securities. It opens out to us the unknown abyss that we all carry within us . . ."{9} Busyness and superficial

activities hide us from the fact that we have little or no inward experience with God. Solitude frees us from social conformity, from being conformed to the patterns of this world that Paul warns us about in Romans 12.

Solitude goes hand in hand with silence. The power of the tongue and the damage it can do is taken very seriously in the Bible. There is a quiet inner strength and confidence that exudes from people who are great listeners, who are able to be silent and to be slow to speak.

The Disciplines of Engagement

Thus, the disciplines of abstinence help us diminish improper entanglements with the world. What about the disciplines of engagement?

Although study is not often thought of as a spiritual discipline, it is the key to a balanced Christian walk. Calvin Miller writes, "Mystics without study are only spiritual romantics who want relationship without effort."{10} Study involves reading, memorizing, and meditation on God's Word. It takes effort and time, and there are no shortcuts. It includes learning from great Christian minds that have gone before us and those who, by their walk and example, can teach much about the power available to believers who seek to experience the light burden that abiding in Jesus offers.

Few Christians deny the need for worship in their weekly routines, even though what constitutes worship has caused considerable controversy. Worship ascribes great worth to God. It is seeing God as He truly is. Willard argues that we should focus our worship through Jesus Christ to the Father. He writes, "When we worship, we fill our minds and hearts with wonder at him—the detailed actions and words of his earthly life, his trial and death on the cross, his resurrection reality, and his work as ascended intercessor."{11}

The discipline of celebration is unfamiliar to most of us, yet Willard argues that it is one of the most important forms of engagement with God. He writes that "We engage in celebration when we enjoy ourselves, our life, our world, in conjunction with our faith and confidence in God's greatness, beauty, and goodness. We concentrate on our life and world as God's work and as God's gift to us."{12} Although much of the scriptural argument for holy celebration is found in the festivals of the Old Testament and the book of Ecclesiastes, Jesus was accused of being a glutton and a drunkard because he chose to dine and celebrate with sinners.

Christian fellowship and confession go hand in hand. It is within the context of fellowship that Christians build up and encourage one-another with the gifts that God has given to us. It is also in this context that we practice confession with trusted believers who know both our strengths and weaknesses. This level of transparency and openness is essential for the church to become the healing place of deep intimacy that people are so hungry for.

Walking with Jesus doesn't mean just knowing things about Him; it means living as He lived. This includes practicing the spiritual disciplines that Jesus practiced. As we do, we will be changed through the Spirit to be more like Him and experience the rest that He has offered to us.

Notes

1. Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines,* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).
2. Ibid., viii.
3. Ibid., x.
4. Ibid., 67.
5. Ibid., 68.
6. Ibid., 29.
7. Ibid., 31.
8. Ibid., 156.

9. Ibid., 161.
10. Ibid., 176.
11. Ibid., 178.
12. Ibid., 179.

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Invisible Women

Sue Bohlin addresses the call for the church to meet the needs of single moms and those widowed by death, divorce, desertion, and imprisonment.

The other morning at church, I was talking to one of our church leaders as he spotted one of our three-year-olds making a run for the lobby. He called the boy's name three times, including extending his hand for a high-five, and was ignored all three times. (I'm a boy mom. I get it. The little guy was completely focused on escaping the worship center—no room for any other thoughts!) Laughing, I asked my friend, "Hey, how are you doing with that 'feeling invisible' thing?"

He was fine with it. But there are a number of people in our churches for whom feeling invisible is no laughing matter. It hurts.

A few days later, I was privileged to teach on 1 Timothy 5, where Paul gives Timothy direction on caring well for the widows in his congregation. In preparing for my message, I learned that in the first century, "widow" referred to a much larger group of women than just those whose husbands had died.

Widows could be women who had lost husbands through death, divorce, desertion, or imprisonment. (We have all four of those in our church.) They could even be women whose

polygamist husbands had come to faith in Christ and learned that God's plan for marriage is one man and one woman, and they sent all but one wife away. Widows could also refer to unmarried women; the sense of "widow" in the first century was a "without-a-man woman." And of course in that time, when women had so few rights and privileges, that was a scary situation.

Paul's instruction to Timothy on superintending the care of widows resonates with how important vulnerable women are to God. The Old Testament has 32 references to widows or widows and orphans! If God says something once it's important . . . but THIRTY-TWO TIMES??!! In the New Testament, the Lord's brother James sums up this Old Testament value, defining true religion as caring for widows and orphans in their distress (1:27).

How should the church care for vulnerable women today? The ones who can easily feel invisible in the church?

One group we need to take better care of is single moms.

I asked my dear friend, a single mom, about her experience. She was grateful for the ways in which a few people from her church stepped in to provide physically in various ways:

- A new friend brought her son to the hospital when she was suddenly admitted, and then cared for him until she was discharged.
- They mowed her lawn
- Some folks gave her a break by taking her son for a few hours to several days
- One especially memorable year, a man took her son to the store to get my friend her one and only Mother's Day gift

But she was always plagued by a constant longing—for belonging, for protection and help, for men to provide balance to her over-protective feminine mothering.

- She longed for a healthy family to draw them into their home and invite them for meals and family times together so they could see what “healthy” and “loving” and “respectful” looked like.
- She longed for a man to invest in her son so he could see how the boy treated his mom and take him aside to say, “Hey buddy, it’s not OK to talk to your mom that way.”
- She longed for a family to say, “Come spend Christmas with us” so it wasn’t just her and her son alone with the Christmas tree—again.

In addition to relational needs, many single moms have needs for practical assistance concerning their homes and cars. And another group of “invisible women” with the same kinds of needs are older single women.

Typical practical needs:

- Help with assembling furniture such as from Ikea
- Trimming trees and other kinds of yard work
- Home repair
- Changing out-of-reach light bulbs
- Winterizing (and then summerizing) a house
- Organizing a closet, room, or garage
- Changing the oil in the car
- Moving stuff (both to a new home and just moving heavy furniture in the house)
- Plumbing help such as installing a new faucet, fixing a dripping faucet or running toilet
- Installing a ceiling fan
- Grocery shopping
- Rides to the doctor, chemo appointments, tests, surgeries and procedures
- Babysitting and carting kids places they need to go
- Helping with budgeting and financial direction
- Meals: home-cooked and delivered, gift cards to restaurants

Just as in the church at Ephesus when Paul was helping Timothy love his people well, we need to connect those with needs, with the people gifted to serve. Or even those without supernatural giftings for service, but a generous, Christlike heart to love others. That's how the church cares for its own.

So they don't feel invisible.

This
blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/invisible-women/ on October 25, 2020.

What's Your Superpower?

If you could choose a superpower, which one would it be? When asked this question as an icebreaker, I've heard some people say they'd love to fly; others say they would choose mindreading. Some would love to be invisible.

But for the believer in Jesus, the idea of having superpowers isn't a fantasy.

It is the *reality* of being indwelled by God Himself, the source of actual and real supernatural power. And He gives gifts, spiritual gifts, that consist of supernatural enabling. We find the spiritual gifts in four places in the New Testament: 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 4.

Consider these spiritual gifts—superpowers, if you will—given by the Holy Spirit to allow His people to minister to others:

Teaching – The supernatural ability to explain clearly and apply effectively the truth of the Word of God.

Pastor/Teacher – One who is supernaturally equipped to shepherd and feed the flock of God with the result of their growth and maturity.

Evangelism – The supernatural capacity to present the gospel message with exceptional clarity and an overwhelming burden for those who don't know Christ.

Word of Knowledge – The supernatural ability to receive information and truth directly from God without natural means. To know without knowing how you know.

Word of Wisdom – The supernatural ability to have insight concerning God's perspective and relay this insight succinctly to others. "Deep insight with handles."

Faith – The supernatural ability to believe God for the impossible.

Exhortation (Encouragement) – The supernatural ability to come alongside and help others by comforting, encouraging, challenging, and rebuking.

Showing Mercy – The supernatural ability to minister compassionately and cheerfully to those who are difficult to minister to.

Giving – The supernatural ability to give of one's material goods to the work of the Lord consistently, generously, sacrificially, with wisdom and cheerfulness.

Leadership/Administration – The supernatural ability to organize and lead projects while handling people tactfully and providing the vision to keep them at the task.

Service – The supernatural ability to serve faithfully and joyfully behind the scenes, in practical ways, in long–term commitments to service.

Helps – The supernatural ability to minister joyfully to God's people in short–term service with flexibility and sensitivity to what needs to be done.

Discernment of Spirits – A supernatural ability to distinguish between the spirit of truth and spirit of error, between holiness and evil. Can instantly sniff out when someone's a phony or lying.

My husband and I created a list of diagnostic questions to help people find their superpowers, which you can find here: www.probe.org/how-do-you-determine-your-spiritual-gift/

Flying and mind-reading aren't on our list, but you might find your superpower here!

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/whats_your_superpower on Apr. 4, 2017.

“How Do You Determine Your Spiritual Gift?”

How do people determine their spiritual gift? Is it through prayer? Or does the Lord reveal it to them in some way?

There are several ways. Praying for guidance about your spiritual gift(s) is the first step, certainly. Also important is educating yourself to find out what the gifts are and what they look like in operation. And ask the people around you what they think your gifts are, if the people around you know anything about spiritual gifts! (They are found in 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11; Romans 12:4-8; Ephesians 4:7; and 1 Peter 4:10.)

I have discovered that when you’re operating in an area of supernatural gifting, it’s like getting on the moving sidewalks at airports—you can get where you’re going twice as fast as the people walking next to you who *aren’t* on the people mover, and there’s energy and power and a spring in your step. It’s FUN! When you’re using your spiritual gifts, you are aware of operating in God’s power and strength instead of your own. . . and the Spirit-led response is humility instead of pride.

After studying spiritual gifts, my husband Ray and I compiled a spiritual gifts inventory that some have found helpful. I hope you do too. (These are limited to the ministry gifts and do not include the foundational gifts of apostleship or prophet, nor the sign gifts of tongues, interpretation of tongues, healings or miracles.)

Spiritual Gifts Evaluation

Teaching – *The supernatural ability to explain clearly and apply effectively the truth of the Word of God.*

- Do you love the Body of Christ and desire that others know more about Scripture and how to apply it?
- Do you love studying the Word of God?
- Do you have a passion for sharing the insights and principles you have learned from the Word?
- Do you find it a challenge to make complicated truths simple and understandable?

Pastor/Teacher – *One who is supernaturally equipped to shepherd and feed the flock of God with the result of their growth and maturity.*

- Do you deeply love the people of God?
- Do you feel a yearning to model the principles of Scripture and mentor others so that they can follow Christ also?
- Do you feel God's calling to shepherd His people, tenderly nurturing and nourishing them?

Evangelism – *The supernatural capacity to present the gospel message with exceptional clarity and an overwhelming burden for those who don't know Christ.*

- Do you find yourself in situations where the topics of Christ and salvation come up?
- Do you gravitate toward relationships with non-Christians?
- When others hear you explain the gospel, do they respond by trusting Christ?
- Do you have a passion for the lost?

Word of Knowledge – *The supernatural ability to receive information and truth directly from God without natural means. To know without knowing how you know.*

- Do you find yourself "knowing" something you did not learn, and unable to explain how you know it?
- If you feel that God has given you a message to give to another Christian, is it confirmed by that person's response as truly coming from God?

Word of Wisdom – *The supernatural ability to have insight concerning God's perspective and relay this insight succinctly to others. "Deep insight with handles."*

- Do you experience flashes of insight on spiritual things, unusual in their clarity?
- Are you able to express this wisdom in ways that minister to people?
- Do you recognize wisdom in others when you hear it?
- Do people consider you unusually wise, and trust your judgment?
- Do you find yourself being quoted, and you recognize the quote as "a God thing"?

Faith – *The supernatural ability to believe God for the impossible.*

- When diverging roads appear before you, are you able to see God's path based on His word, in a way that others miss?
- Do you depend on God's resources and guidance to an unusual degree?
- Are you able to firmly claim God's presence in the midst of chaos?
- When God answers your prayers, is your response one of calm satisfaction rather than wonderment?

Exhortation (Encouragement) – *The supernatural ability to come alongside and help others by comforting, encouraging, challenging, and rebuking.*

- Are you especially sensitive to people?
- When you encourage someone, do they respond with grateful appreciation?
- Is the timing of your encouragings usually "perfect"?
- When you challenge or rebuke another believer, is it well received?

Showing Mercy – *The supernatural ability to minister compassionately and cheerfully to those who are difficult to*

minister to.

- Do you have the ability to sense when a person is in need, even before they tell you?
- Are you drawn to people with emotional or physical pain, and to those society considers “unlovely”?
- Do you have an intuitive sense of when to be quiet and when to speak, or what to say and what not to say?
- Do people seek you out when they’re hurting? Do they enjoy having you around?

Giving – *The supernatural ability to give of one’s material goods to the work of the Lord consistently, generously, sacrificially, with wisdom and cheerfulness.*

- Are you enthusiastic when presented with an opportunity to give money to meet a need?
- Are you constantly looking for ways to give?
- Do you enjoy giving privately or anonymously?
- Do you REALLY think of money as God’s, not yours?

Leadership/Administration – *The supernatural ability to organize and lead projects while handling people tactfully and providing the vision to keep them at the task.*

- Do you enjoy taking a disorganized situation and straightening it out?
- Are you able to motivate others to complete the project? Do people respond when you step in to give leadership?
- Do you enjoy planning and completing projects?
- Do you enjoy sorting out details, or do they frustrate you?

Service – *The supernatural ability to serve faithfully and joyfully behind the scenes, in practical ways, in long-term commitments to service.*

- Do you willingly volunteer to help with details?
- Do you prefer to work behind the scenes?

- Do you gain a sense of satisfaction when others succeed as a result of your behind-the-scenes work?
- Is faithfulness over the long term important to you?

Helps — *The supernatural ability to minister joyfully to God's people in short-term service with flexibility and sensitivity to what needs to be done.*

- Are you sensitive to specific and immediate needs?
- Are you flexible?
- Would you rather meet a one-time need than commit yourself to long-term service?

Discernment of Spirits — *A supernatural ability to distinguish between the spirit of truth and spirit of error, between holiness and evil. Can instantly sniff out when someone's a phony or lying.*

- Do you have an internal alarm that goes off when you encounter something phony or evil?
- Even when you're the only one who senses something wrong, is your "intuition" eventually validated?
- Do you (and others) consider yourself a good judge of character?

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

Animal House Revisited:

Fraternity Fosters Faith

College fraternities don't always have the best reputations. Wild parties, hazing, elitism, substance abuse, gang rapes and more help perpetuate the Animal House image that the film of the same name portrayed. Parents – and many students – might wonder why any sane person ever would want to join.

Though the weaknesses of university Greek-letter societies are often what grab headlines, numerous national fraternities and sororities try hard to change both their image and substance. Believe it or not, many were founded to promote character development and strong cultural values and are seeking to return to their roots.

For example, my own fraternity, Lambda Chi Alpha, has a vision "…to prepare and encourage collegiate men of good character, high ethics, and noble ideals to contribute positively to the world in which they live." Lambda Chi's annual North American Food Drive has raised over 10.5 million pounds of food for the needy since 1993.

The liability crisis is one factor motivating "Greeks" to focus on character. In today's litigious society, a tragic injury or death can prompt lawsuits that could put them out of business. Moderating local behavior helps perpetuate national survival.

But there is more going on here than mere survival. Often top leaders of national Greek organizations are deeply committed citizens who seek to live by and promote the principles their groups espouse.

Many Greek organizations were founded on biblical or quasi-biblical principles. Alpha Tau Omega (ATO) is one of the more prominent fraternities with over 240 active and inactive chapters and over 6,000 undergraduate members. ATO chief executive officer Wynn Smiley told me of his group's

convictions.

It seems that ATO was founded in 1865 by a 19-year-old former Confederate soldier who wanted to promote brotherly love as a means of helping to reconcile North and South after the U.S. Civil War. The organization that young Otis Allan Glazebrook founded was not religious but sought to foster reconciliation and brotherhood based on the self-sacrifice and unconditional love demonstrated by Jesus.

Smiley and his colleagues emphasize these roots in their recruitment and educational development. “Jesus made the most radical statements on love,” notes Smiley. An example: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you….”

Allen Wilson is ATO’s Spiritual Leadership Consultant. Most chapters have chaplains and Wilson travels to help encourage spiritual development. ATO even has a devotional book with inspirational articles by alumni and others on practical themes like character, trust, humility, truth, servant leadership and persevering through disappointment.

Smiley readily admits that not every member or chapter exemplifies such values. But he points out that hidden personal hurts – from family illness to depression – plus students’ concerns for their own future, ethical dilemmas and faith raise questions that “brothers practicing brotherly love should help each other explore.” He says that “ATO is committed to talking about issues of faith” and to providing “a loving, trusting environment for brothers to explore, discuss, argue and perhaps even on occasion resolve questions.”

He is onto something significant here. Animal House, meet the competition.