

Simplifying Life (Part Seven): Practicing Spiritual Scales

David F. Maas

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Greetings brothers and sisters from Simi Valley, California, way out in the interior of the Golden West. Over the past eight months, we have taken a spiritual journey, simplifying life by eliminating clutter, organizing time, managing relationships, waiting on God's timing, and keeping His seventh day Sabbath, yielding to God's and man's laws. Now today we move to the concluding message in this series (my 100th message on the Church of the Great God website).

For the final segment in this series of Simplifying Life, my purpose (or SPS) is that by practicing spiritual scales, namely prayer, Bible study, meditation, and fasting, we avoid costly wasters of time, such as social media, the mendacious legacy media, and tons of spam e-mail. We practice our spiritual scales, not just understand or eliminate negative habits, but habitually engage in spiritual scales so that our lives become simplified and fine-tuned.

Just as a musician assiduously practices scales to bring precision and simplicity into their playing, we must practice spiritual scales to bring precision, harmony, and maturity to our life in Christ. Professional musicians do not just play pieces, they practice scales daily because scales build foundational muscle memory, precision, ease, and simplicity under complexity. Similarly, our spiritual life becomes simpler (less chaotic, more tuned) when we practice the spiritual tools.

I Timothy 4:7-8 But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

The *Amplified Classic* edition adds the additional concrete details: "But refuse and avoid irreverent legends (profane and impure and godless fictions, mere grandmother's tales) and silly myths and express your disapproval of

them. Train yourself toward godliness (piety), keeping yourself spiritually fit. For physical training is of some value (useful for a little), but godliness (spiritual training) is useful and of value in everything and in every way, for it holds promise for the present life as well as the life which is to come.”

The apostle Paul uses the metaphor of “training” (like exercise) for godliness, reminding us that spiritual maturity is not automatic; it takes practice. Practicing spiritual scales simplifies life because we are not always reacting against unfamiliar patterns, but when we are tuned, we are ready. It simplifies life by reducing cacophonous noise and chaotic responses, requiring constant re-learning.

A pianist wakes up and spends 10 minutes performing scales before tackling new repertoire, acclimating his fingers to know the patterns, so that the complex piece becomes easier. For the past year, I have been practicing the clarinet for an hour a day, strengthening my embouchure as well as acclimating myself to new keys beyond C, F, and G, learning to master works in E and E flat, B, C#, and other keys that have proven difficult in the past.

The late Benny Goodman (whom I had the pleasure of hearing along with Al Hirt on Bourbon Street, New Orleans back in 1974) suggested that the last organs on the human body to wear out are the lips and throat necessary for producing the embouchure for playing the clarinet, as well as the trumpet for that matter. Consequently, I have resolved to practice the clarinet Monday through Friday for the rest of my life.

Weekly, at 9:00 AM California time and 11:00 AM Illinois time, Aaron and I practice online together for one hour. We are putting together a repertoire for the annual Ulmer Jam session at the Feast this year to take place in Nashville. Aaron and I have been listening to videos of polka bands learning to play them by ear. Heretofore, when we thought the key was too difficult, we transposed them into easier keys (C, F, or G). But at our last practice, we agreed to learn the key in which the band performed the tunes.

On Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, I tune into the Dinner Bell Hour on KNUJ, having a karaoke practice with the Six Fat Dutchmen, Babe Wagner, Mallek’s Fishermen, Fezz Fritsche, Romy Gosz, Bernie Roberts,

the Wendinger Band, and dozens of other bands, thoroughly performing the pieces they are performing, writing in my journal the various keys in which they perform them. When the key is difficult, I force myself to play along until I feel comfortable with the heretofore impossible key.

When Deborah Armstrong was my student back at Ambassador College, I complained to her that sometimes her dad seemed to be a sadistic composer, writing pieces in five or six flats or sharps. At the recent Feast in Myrtle Beach, I was grateful to borrow Stephen Mews' cheat book placing these hymns in far more humane key signatures. Nevertheless, in the coming future, I plan to practice the more difficult key signatures daily, striving for eventual mastery of every key signature. God's called-out saints similarly need to expand their daily use of spiritual scales, extending their meditation time, scripture readings, and systematic Bible study.

Having entered retirement age seven years ago, I decided that instead of allowing my nervous system to be bathed in social media, or the satanic left-wing media, making me profoundly discouraged or depressed, I would choose a path that would align with God's will—increasing the daily quota of systematic Bible study, focusing on a daily portion of Psalms, Proverbs, Old Testament readings, New Testament readings, and longer periods of meditation.

I also have had to make a choice on how to use my allotted daily time, whether to devote my time to social media and political controversy or devote my time to God's agenda. As we age, we find that gravity limits what we can do, forcing us to carefully choose our options.

I have mentioned in previous messages, I would often send vituperative salvos to several of my former reprobate students and faculty members who drifted to the leftist woke, satanic, God-hating darkside. But then, I started to appreciate the old Johnny Cash ballad, "The One on the Right was on the Left," especially the verse:

Now this should be a lesson if you plan to start a folk group

Don't go mixing politics with the folk songs with the folk songs of our land.

Just work on harmony and diction

Play your Banjo well

And if you have political convictions

Keep them to yourself

Consequently, following the Feast, I have stopped responding to my former students and colleagues, finding pleasantly that when, or if, a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him (Proverbs 16:7). Some of my students that I had previously written off as hopelessly brainwashed, started to respond positively to my Facebook postings, to my extreme astonishment.

Back in 1967, the late Karl Beyersdorfer counseled the Duluth, Minnesota congregation that our time was our life, and that the only practical way of scheduling our time was to set aside time for prayer, time for study, and time for meditation before we scheduled anything else, adding that everything else will fall into place. We have the obligation to shift our attention away from concerns of the satanic culture and on to God's agenda. Exchanging carnal habits for godly habits describes the process of character development.

Motivational specialist Millard Bennett teaches,

Habit is like a cable, and you weave a strand a day until it becomes unbreakable. Good habits carry you to success, and bad habits ruin you. It's as simple as that. Good and bad habits are formed the same way, little bit by little bit, except that instead of building up, as good habits do, bad habits tear down.

For the past several years, following the counsel of the psalmist David, I have tried to gradually increase the quantity of spiritual food entering my nervous system, hiding God's Word in my heart that I might not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11). Consequently, I have set daily, monthly, and yearly goals, resolving to systematically navigate through the Scriptures for the rest of my life.

When sermon preparation, abstract preparation, or Forerunner Commentary preparation become more pressing, I can go to the minimum of one verse for the Old Testament reading or one verse for the New Testament reading but realize I have made a commitment to navigate through the entire Bible for the rest of my life. The meditation time I have confined for the hikes through the boulders and mountains of the Santa Susana mountains on the Corrigan Movie Ranch.

I am currently in my eighth year of electronic prayer journal keeping, along with the already established habit of daily journal writing since the fall of 1971, 54 years ago, what I refer to as a pilot light to sustain creativity, which would rapidly become dormant if I ceased keeping it up, just like getting down on the floor, doing 50 scissors kicks prevent me from becoming prematurely mobility-challenged similar to my late father at the age of 93.

Writing down our prayers and God's responses helps us to better remember, providing a valuable record to which we can go back and refer to later. In my electronic journal, after laying out my intentions to my heavenly Father, I color the urgent plaintive petitions red (there have been a bunch of them lately), God's affirmative responses (or what I consider them) I color in green, but the petitions answered contrary to my desire (the frequent Proverbs 16:9 adjustments and detour) I color purple for study and pondering. I realize that many of us have been going through horrendous trials during these past several weeks and years.

The purple roadblocks provide necessary insightful data as to how we can re-align our spiritual trek with Almighty God's purpose. Perhaps in practicing our spiritual scales, we have mastered the key of C, F, and G, but do not do so well on E, Eb, Bb—or C# or F#. We should set it as our goal to become proficient in every key, learning the circle of fifths, the related minor keys, and the intricate mathematical patterns.

Consequently, as God's called-out saints, we must begin the day with our scales, or what they call in the monastery our daily breviaries, Psalms, Proverbs, Old Testament readings, New Testament readings, prayer,

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(<https://www.cgg.org>)

meditation, and regular fasting, preventing us from falling into an unproductive reduction. What short “scale” are we willing to practice this week (5 to 10 minutes a day) that we will tune our lives?

Perhaps, brothers and sisters, we can begin by practicing Psalm 119:11, hiding God’s Word in our heart that we might not sin against Him.

This is Wrangler Dave out in the Golden West among the Joshua trees, ocotillos, saguaros, and chaparral returning you to mission control in Fort Mill, South Carolina.