



SPIRITUAL **disciplines**

A MEANS TO AN END!

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1 Timothy 4:7-10

Raymond Edman wrote a little book, “They Found the Secret: 20 Transformed lives that reveal a touch of eternity.” The statement “lives that reveal a touch of eternity” is profound. I ask myself, does my life reveal a touch of eternity? Is there evidence that my Bible reading, my prayer, my worship, have led me to reflect more of Jesus Christ in my life? Paul writing his final words to Timothy commanded him to live a life of spiritual discipline for the purpose of godliness. The disciplines of the Christian life are not the end, they are the means to a greater purpose. God’s purpose for us in salvation is much more than simply to go to heaven, it is that we might be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). **Spiritual disciplines are one of the means God has given us for our spiritual progress.**

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES ARE A MEANS TO AN END! (1 Timothy 4:7-10)

- **The end!**

Our primary focus in life!

The phrase “fixed our hope” is something done in the past with continuing results in the present. As believers our focus is not merely on the temporal, but primarily on the eternal. Our hope is focused on God and to that end we exert our primary energies.

Our primary goal in life! - “Godliness is closeness to Christ and conformity to Christ.”

Eusebeia (godliness) expresses the reality of reverence, piety, and true spiritual virtue. **Godliness** is a right attitude and response toward the true Creator God; a preoccupation from the heart with holy and sacred realities. **Godliness** is the heart and soul of Christian character, and the aim of Christian living (cf.. 1 Tim. 2:2; 2 Peter 3:11).

(See Enoch, Genesis 5:21-24; Noah, Genesis 6)

- **The means!**

1 Timothy 4:7 tells us that Christian discipline doesn’t start with our resolve, but rather it starts with a command in Scripture. The spiritual disciplines are God’s idea, not ours.

Conforming to the image of God’s Son means God has called us to be like Jesus (Romans 8:29). This transformation

does not happen instantly when we are saved nor does it occur automatically. Spiritual transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit in us (Titus 3:4-7) as we practice spiritual disciplines.

Spiritual disciplines can be described as those behaviors that augment our spiritual growth and enable us to grow to spiritual maturity.

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life by Donald S. Whitney

The spiritual disciplines are those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are habits of devotion, habits of experiential Christianity that have been practiced by God's people since biblical times. I describe them with six key aspects.

1. Personal and Corporate

First, the Bible prescribes both personal and interpersonal spiritual disciplines. There are those spiritual disciplines that we practice alone and those that we practice with other Christians.

2. Doing and Being

A second characteristic of spiritual disciplines is that they are activities; they are not attitudes. Disciplines are practices. Spiritual disciplines are things you do. They are not character qualities. They are not graces. They are not the fruit of the Spirit. They are things you do.

3. Modeled in the Bible

A third descriptor of the spiritual disciplines is that we are talking about things that are practices taught or modeled in the Bible.

4. Promoted in the Scriptures

A fourth characteristic of spiritual disciplines is that those found in Scripture are sufficient for knowing and experiencing God and for growing in Christlikeness.

5. Derived from the Gospel

A fifth description of spiritual disciplines is that they are derived from the gospel, not divorced from the gospel. Rightly practiced, the spiritual disciplines take us deeper into the glories of the gospel of Jesus Christ, not away from it as though we have moved on to some advanced level of Christianity.

6. Means, Not End

And the last characteristic of the spiritual disciplines is that they are means and not ends. The end — that is, the purpose of practicing the disciplines is godliness — is to “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” (1 Timothy 4:7 NASB). ^[1]

[1] Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, Donald Whitney

Donald Whitney lists 10 spiritual disciplines:

1. Bible intake
2. Prayer
3. Worship
4. Evangelism
5. Serving
6. Stewardship
7. Fasting
8. Silence and solitude
9. Journaling
10. Learning

In his book, *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster outlined spiritual disciplines as follows:

1. Inward disciplines
 - a. Meditation
 - b. Prayer
 - c. Fasting
 - d. Study
2. Outward disciplines
 - a. Simplicity
 - b. Solitude
 - c. Submission
 - d. Service
3. Corporate disciplines
 - a. Confession
 - b. Worship
 - c. Guidance
 - d. Celebration

WORSHIP IS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE!

(Matthew 4:10; Psalm 95:6; Matthew 15:8-9; Hebrews 12:28; John 4:23-24; Hebrews 10:25)

A.W. Tozer said, “I can safely say, on the authority of all that is revealed in the Word of God, that any man or woman on this earth who is bored and turned off by worship is not ready for heaven.”

The discipline of worship is unique among the spiritual disciplines. It can stand alone, but it also applies in every other discipline—prayer, meditation, singing, reading of Scripture, study of Scripture, serving, confession, etc.

Worship has been defined as:

Giving adoration to God through appropriate acts of praise that recognize His greatness, His honor, and His position. These acts are done in corporate or individual settings, and according to standards given by God and pleasing to Him.

Alan Summers wrote,

Scripture teaches that Christians should offer praise continually (Heb 13:15). The force of the word “continually” is that it should be consistent. Worship, therefore, should be characteristic of our lives. This idea is illustrated in the tabernacle, where the altar was continually burning (Lev 6:13); every morning and every evening a sacrifice of praise was offered. In order, however, for that to be achieved, a certain degree of preparation was required. The sacrifice had to be suitable, it had to be sacrificed at the correct time, and there had to be sufficient wood. The ashes required to be raked and the grate of the altar cleared. These responsibilities fell to the priests, who were a disciplined team (or should have been) and were dedicated to keeping the altar burning. Although Christians no longer worship at a literal altar, the same type of discipline is still required to keep the flame of worship burning.

It may seem odd to some that discipline has any role to play in worship. Is worship not the spontaneous overflow of the heart to God? If worship is spontaneous, surely it cannot require discipline. But experience shows that if we only worship when we feel like it, the chances are we won't feel like it very often.

Austin Stone Church in Austin, Texas provided a practical guide for their members that I find to be helpful: [2]

Here are just a few ways that the Bible encourages us to discipline ourselves “for the purpose of godliness” in a corporate worship setting:

1. Show up
2. Sing
3. Posture yourself
4. Engage emotionally
5. Think about God
6. Prepare for the next gathering

[2] <https://www.austinstone.org/articles/is-corporate-worship-a-spiritual-discipline>

TAKE AWAY:

Psalm 63:8 (KJV 1900) 8 My soul followeth hard after thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me.

Psalm 63:8 (NASB) 8 My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me.

A.W. Tozer “The world is perishing for lack of the knowledge of God and the Church is famishing for want of His presence.” [3]

1. Be disciplined for the purpose of godliness!
2. Don't be a Pharisee!