

The Seven Spiritual Habits of a Maturing Messianic Jewish Faith!

Living as Fully Committed Followers of Messiah Yeshua



*Part of a Topical Series by
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Discipline is a bad word in our culture today. Although, when surveyed, people will often say we need more discipline in our society, many of these same people actually work against it in the daily habits of their own lives, and in the lives of their children. Why? Because in our society discipline infers the values of self-control and self-denial, things we are loath to do as Americans. Discipline, like the habit of flossing, is for our own good, and, whether the good we seek is dietary, financial or time management, we need to recognize that our most important discipline need involves our spiritual lives. **Disciplining ourselves to actively develop basic spiritual habits is essential if we are serious about growing as followers of Messiah Yeshua.**

Definitions & Foundations

It is important to define some terms as we get started and the first word that needs a clear definition is **discipline** itself. According to Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary discipline means "Training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character." In other words, **discipline is an active pursuit toward personal development.** The Hebrew word for discipline comes from לָמַד (lamad), to learn, from which we get the word disciple תַּלְמִיד (talmid): *one who has learned, accustomed oneself, been trained.* The Hebrew word לָמַד (lamad) is frequently used in Scripture as part of a challenge for, or personal commitment to, living out G-d's Instructions¹. **G-d expects his people to learn of him and to actively accustom themselves to living their lives his way!**

¹ Deut 11:19; Psalm 25:4-5, 143:10; Ezra 7:10

The challenge to live “accustomed to G-d’s ways” is repeated often within the New Testament text. Messiah Yeshua himself states, “*If anyone wants to come after me, let him say ‘No’ to himself, take up his execution-stake, and keep following me.*”² Shaul in Romans 12:2 adds his own challenge as well, “*...do not let yourselves be conformed to the standards of the ‘Olam Haze’ (this world). Instead, keep letting yourself be transformed by the renewing of your minds; so that you will **know what G-d wants and will agree that what he wants is good, satisfying and able to succeed.***”

If we do any action repeatedly, after awhile we will develop that action as a **habit**. **A habit is any action we do regularly in our lives that has become for us almost involuntary.** Some habits are good, like brushing our teeth and washing our hands, while some are not so good, like watching TV or biting our nails. As followers of Messiah Yeshua, we need to be so committed to our personal spiritual growth that spiritual disciplines become for us spiritual habits that function almost involuntarily in our lives! Before we actually discuss specific spiritual habits it is important for us to clarify that for these habits to develop we must first reach a point of personal spiritual brokenness, daily understanding that knowing G-d and the reality of our eternal reward as followers of Messiah Yeshua, far outweighs the pleasures and priorities of this world.³ This is really the point of Messiah Yeshua and Shaul’s earlier statements. **Without a foundation of spiritual brokenness we can never build for ourselves a maturing Messianic Jewish faith!**

Seven Spiritual Habits

I believe there are seven basic spiritual habits, spiritual disciplines, which we must practice if we honestly want to mature in our personal relationship with G-d. These habits must be actively developed and incorporated into our lives. We can’t just superficially drape ourselves in them; they must become part of the core of who we are as followers of the Messiah Yeshua.

The first spiritual habit is **Humble Teachability**. Many times in the Scriptures G-d criticizes people for their hardness of heart, and its not just Pharaoh! G-d spoke to Israel with the same challenge and we need to heed his warning⁴. Are you willing to learn from G-d, allowing him to change and shape you? Are you willing to learn from others, living in accountability to other believers? Without a humble and teachable heart, you will be severely hindered in your personal spiritual maturity. *Remember that the humble shall inherit the earth!*

The second spiritual habit is **Diligent Study**. To know G-d we must study his revealed Instruction to us which is his Scripture. We need to study it daily on our own or with others. A good practice is to read sequentially three or four chapters a day with the goal of completing the whole Bible in one year. Besides just reading, it is important to also meditate and memorize smaller portions of Scripture to gain a deeper understanding of specific teaching and for personal application for one’s life. How much time do you dedicate to studying G-d’s Instruction to you? Do you intend to do what you read? *Remember that knowing G-d requires knowing his Instruction!*

² Matt 16:24 – All quoted text is from the Complete Jewish Bible

³ Matt 6:33; Phil 3:7-14, Col 3:1-17

⁴ Zechariah 7:12

The third spiritual habit is ***Deliberating Prayer***. Setting aside specific time each day for intentional, unhurried and well thought out prayer is a sign of a maturing faith. If we really believe the Scripture's teaching to take our concerns to G-d, then we must make prayer a clear priority in our schedule, both personal prayer as well as communal prayer with others. Often we fall into the habit of taking our concerns to others without really wrestling with G-d about them ourselves. In reality we seek the comfort of others instead of the comfort of G-d. When was the last time you prayed in an unhurried manner, carefully seeking G-d's action in regards to specific needs? How much time do you set aside for deliberating prayer each day, each week? *Remember that G-d expects us to prioritize intentional prayer!*

The fourth spiritual habit is ***Congregational Integration***. Just showing up for services and studies is insufficient for spiritual maturity. You must be committed to your community: its purpose, programs and people. Having just a superficial connection to a congregation will never allow you to become a unified and useful part of the community; you will not be able to be raised up to areas of service, responsibility and leadership. Today Congregations are in desperate need of people who demonstrate their commitment to G-d through their commitment to their local community of believers. Which congregation are you committed to being a part of, and how involved are you? *Remember that G-d calls us to be actively connected to our congregations so we can be fully useful for service!*

The fifth spiritual habit is ***Commitment to Service***. An integrated member of a congregation is a committed servant within that congregation. This happens naturally as the fourth and fifth spiritual habits develop together within the life of a spiritually maturing believer who recognizes their spiritual responsibility to serve. The list of service opportunities within a congregation is never ending, especially if a congregation is committed to reaching out to those who are not yet followers of the Messiah. The pre-requisites for committed service can be summed up with the acronym FAST: ***Faithful, Available, Spiritually Maturing, and Teachable***. What are you responsible for doing in service to G-d and how is the quality of your service? Are you humbly teachable so that someone can mentor you? *Remember that G-d expects us to serve him through committed service within and through our congregational community!*

The sixth spiritual habit is an ***Active Witness***. Messiah Yeshua commanded us very clearly: "You shall be my witnesses!" Each of us has a personal responsibility to tell people who Yeshua is, and to actively look for opportunities to share about him with others. Since it is true that many of our Jewish people are less than enthusiastic to **hear** about our belief in Yeshua's Messiahship, we need to understand that our greatest witness is **living out** an observable Messiah-like life. Yet this does not negate our responsibility to also boldly and publicly speak about our faith. G-d will not be pleased with us if we hold back or hide our belief in Yeshua, nor should we be silent in the face of persecution and rejection. Do the people around you know you follow Yeshua as Messiah? Are you bold and thoughtful to engage others in conversation about Messiah? *Remember that G-d expects us to be his active public witnesses!*

The seventh spiritual habit is a ***Persistent Life of Righteousness***. People today want to know if your religious faith is genuine. **The reality of your faith is proven by the changes it brings into your life!** As followers of the Messiah Yeshua we are commanded to be holy as the L-RD our G-d is holy. Yeshua also commanded us to live without hypocrisy, and to go beyond just the written

understanding of Scripture to embrace the spirit of the commands. We must pursue holy living as followers of Messiah, being willing to set aside actions and activities that in any way hurt our testimony and hinder our ability to live unencumbered for Messiah Yeshua. Are you actively seeking to live a holy life? What questionable actions have you given up for G-d? *Remember that G-d has called us to live lives that pursue his righteousness and set us apart for him!*

A Final Challenge for Commitment

In his book, *Dedication and Leadership*, comparing Communist indoctrination and Biblical discipleship, Douglas Hyde said the following:

When you have succeeded in making men believe that change is necessary and possible and that they are the ones who can achieve it; when you have convinced them that they and the small minority of whom they are a part can transform the world in their lifetime, you have achieved something very considerable indeed. You have put into their lives a dynamic force so powerful that you can bring them to do what would otherwise be impossible. The dull and humdrum becomes meaningful. Life becomes purposeful and immensely more worth living.

Are you interested in living a life with eternal purpose? Are you convinced of the reality of Yeshua's Messiahship? Then take up the challenge to change the world, allowing G-d to change you into the spiritually maturing Messianic Jew he needs to make a difference in this world. Remember, G-d is very particular in who he will use. He requires complete dedication and commitment. As D.L. Moody, a Christian evangelist, said so well over 100 years ago:

"The world has yet to see what G-d can do with and for and through and in and by the man who is fully and wholly consecrated to him. I will try my utmost to be that man."

Do you desire to be that person? Prayerfully commit to becoming that person today by actively developing into the maturing Messianic Jew G-d wants you to be!

Want to talk more? Contact Rabbi Gliebe at:

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