

Spiritual Disciplines Session 1

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Introduction:

Bible study material taken from Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991)

- a. The Spiritual Disciplines are those personal and corporate disciplines that promote spiritual growth. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times. **(1 Timothy 4:7–8)**

“Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” 1 Timothy 4:7-8

- b. We will examine the Spiritual Disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, worship, evangelism, service, stewardship, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling, and learning.

Spiritual Disciplines-The Means to Godliness

- a. God uses three primary catalysts for changing us and conforming us to Christlikeness, but only one is largely under our control.

- i. One catalyst the Lord uses to change us is people. **(Proverbs 27:17)**

“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” Proverbs 27:17

Sometimes God uses our friends to sharpen us into more Christlike living, and sometimes He uses our enemies to file away our rough, ungodly edges. Parents, children, spouses, coworkers, customers, teachers, neighbors, pastors—God changes us through these people.

- ii. Another change agent God uses in our lives is circumstances. **(Romans 8:28)**

“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

Financial pressures, physical conditions, even the weather are used in the hands of Divine Providence to stimulate His elect toward holiness.

- iii. Then there is the catalyst of the Spiritual Disciplines.

This catalyst differs from the first two in that when He uses the Disciplines, God works from the inside out. When He changes us through people and circumstances, the process works from the outside in.

The Spiritual Disciplines also differ from the other two methods of change in that God grants us a measure of choice regarding involvement with them.

We often have little choice regarding the people and circumstances God brings into our lives, but we can decide, for example, whether we will read the Bible or fast today.

- b. So on the one hand, we recognize that even the most iron-willed self-discipline will not make us more holy, for growth in holiness is a gift from God (**John 17:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 2:11**).

“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth”. John 17:17

“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.” 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

“For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. 11 For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,” Hebrews 2:10-11

- c. On the other hand, we can do something to further the process. God has given us the Spiritual Disciplines as a means of receiving His grace and growing in Godliness. By them we place ourselves before God for Him to work in us.

Spiritual Disciplines- God Expects them

- a. Holiness is not an option for those who claim to be children of the Holy One (**1 Peter 1:15–16**), so neither are the means of holiness, that is, the Spiritual Disciplines, an option.

“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:14-16

- b. The expectation of disciplined spirituality is implied in Jesus’ offer of **Matthew 11:29** and of **Luke 9:23**.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Matthew 11:29

“And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.” Luke 9:23-24

- c. They are fruit producing: (**2 Pe 1:3-9**)

“3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith

with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.” 2 Peter 1:3-9

We rely on the Holy Spirit **(2 Tim. 1:7)**

“7 for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” 2 Timothy 1:7

Discipline without direction is drudgery. But the Spiritual Disciplines are never drudgery as long as we practice them with the goal of Godliness in mind. (Donald Whitney)

Spiritual Disciplines- Bible Intake

No Spiritual Discipline is more important than the intake of God's Word. (Donald Whitney)

1. HEARING God's Word

i. But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” Luke 11:28

ii. So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. Romans 10:17

iii. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 1 Timothy 4:13

Christian Radio, podcasts, youtube, the opportunities we have now are endless

2. Reading God's Word

i. What is the main idea of Matthew 4:4?

When Jesus said, “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4), surely He intended at the very least for us to read “every word.”

ii. What is Paul telling timothy about the scriptures in 2 Timothy 3:16?

Since “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16), shouldn't we read it?

iii. How does John describe the person that reads and heeds the Bible in Revelation 1:3 ?

Revelation 1:3 tells us, “Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.” God

Barna 2019

“Bible Engagement Positively Correlates to Relational & Spiritual Growth” Barna 2019

Half of monthly Bible users (49%) agree their engagement with the Bible has made them feel more willing to engage with their faith. Among adults who use the Bible at least three to four times a year, three in five (61%) express they always experience a greater awareness of how much they need God. Half agree they consistently feel a sense of connection with God (51%), and a similar proportion (50%) desires to know God better. Another 46 percent of Bible users say they show more loving behavior toward others, and one in three (34%) is more generous with their time, energy or financial resources. Results also show a positive influence on how they treat people of a different race than themselves (62%), their support for refugees (55%), their decisions at work or school (53%) and their decisions about sex and sexuality (49%).

Practical Steps

1. Find the Time .
2. Find a Bible Reading Plan

Even if you don’t read through the Bible in a year’s time, keep a record of which books you have read. Put a check beside a chapter when you read it or by the title of a book in the table of contents when you’ve completed it.

3. Find at least one word , phrase , or verse to meditate on each time you read.

3. Studying God’s Word

“If reading the Bible can be compared to cruising the width of a clear, sparkling lake in a motorboat, studying the Bible is like slowly crossing that same lake in a glass-bottomed boat.”

- a. As author Jerry Bridges put it, “Reading gives us breadth , but study gives us depth .”

- b. *“For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.”* **Ezra 7:10**

- c. *“Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness , examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”* **Acts 17:11**

- d. *“When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments .”* **2 Timothy 4:13**

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life More Application

If your growth in Godliness were measured by the quality of your Bible intake, what would be the result?

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