

# Spiritual Disciplines: Meditation

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Date: 18 January 2021

Preacher: Kent Dixon

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning and welcome to our online service for Sunday, January 17th, 2021. My name is Kent Dixon and I'm the lead pastor of Braemar Baptist Church here in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Welcome to everyone who's joining us this morning. And whether you're tuning in live this morning and joining us right now on Sunday morning, or you're checking out the video later in the week, we're welcome here.

And thank you for engaging with us in whatever way you've chosen to do that. You're welcome here to join us this morning. Well, I want to remind folks who are connected with our church that we do send an email newsletter out every week, as well as a message from me on Tuesdays, so a pastoral message.

So if you're interested in being added to either of those lists, please just send a quick email to info at braemarbaptist.com and you'll be able to connect with us that way.

You can also check out past sermons and other goodies on our website, braemarbaptist.com. You can follow us on Facebook and you'll receive notifications of whenever we're going to go live with a video, as well as other messages and announcements on our Facebook page.

[ 1 : 22 ] If you're a podcast person, our sermons are converted as well into podcasts. So if you like to listen to things on the go while you're in your car or while you're on the bus or whatever, however you choose to do that, you can check out our podcast, which is called Braemar Cast.

And you can find it on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and wherever you look for podcasts, you can track that down. So lots of ways to connect with us, lots of ways to listen to sermons.

And so we encourage you to connect with us in whatever way you're able to do that and you prefer to do that. So just a quick pastoral announcement as well. Many folks who need to connect with me will phone me or will send me an email or send me a text message or a Facebook message or that kind of thing and let me know that they would like to connect with me when they need my support or encouragement.

And I am happy to do that. And before COVID, we were in a lot of ways able to connect on Sunday mornings in person. So I would connect with folks before or after the service.

We would make connections on Sunday mornings and then be able to follow up at another time. But unfortunately, we don't really have that option right now. So I just wanted to take a moment to remind all of you that I do care about you very much and I'm available to you.

[ 2 : 48 ] So unfortunately, my psychic abilities are poor. So if you'd like to hear from me or would like to connect with me for encouragement or prayer or just to share something that's maybe a praise item that you're facing in your life or a challenge that you'd like some encouragement over, I encourage you to do that.

So please reach out to me. You can connect with me through the church at info at braemarbaptist.com or connect with the church by phone as well.

And yeah, I am available and I would love to connect with you. So please reach out to me and I'm available for you. So let's begin our time in prayer this morning.

Let's pray. Father God, thank you that in the middle of uncertainty, you are still God. You're still here with us and you're still in control.

Lord, we ask for peace in the United States in the coming week. There's a transfer of government coming and tensions remain high. Lord, we ask you to change minds and hearts that may be focused on anger and violence.

[ 4 : 01 ] Lord, we ask for peace. We ask for you to change minds and hearts, Lord. We recognize that throughout human history as rulers and leaders and governments have come and gone.

You have remained in control. You've remained as the ruler and sovereign over all things. And you continue to do that in these days, Lord.

Thank you that in the middle of the pandemic, in light of political tensions, in light of uncertainty in our own lives, you remain in control.

Lord, your word reminds us in 1 Peter to humble ourselves under your mighty hand so that you may lift us up in due time.

So this morning, Lord, we come before you, humbly recognizing your awesome power and your amazing grace and love and kindness to us.

[ 5 : 00 ] Lord, your word also calls us to cast our anxiety, cast our worries on you because you care for us.

Father God, help us to do just that. Help us to gather all our worries and all our fears into a big bundle in our arms and hurl them at your feet.

Lord, this morning, we also recognize that there are needs in our congregation. We ask for, ask in faith for you to meet those needs, Lord. I've had conversations about people who have had struggles and you have shown up and you have provided and we thank you for that.

Lord, we ask you to provide jobs. We ask for financial provision for folks that need that. We ask for physical health and restoration.

Lord, we ask for safety and protection from COVID. Lord, even as the vaccines are becoming available and are actually being put into people's arms, we recognize that it will take time before that happens or is an opportunity for all of us.

[ 6 : 15 ] And so we ask that you protect us in the meantime and that you provide for our needs. Lord, you've provided in the past. There are many stories of faithfulness and provision in and for and through our church.

Lord, we thank you for the ways you've been faithful to us in the past and we trust that you will continue to be faithful to us in all the days of our lives.

Father God, may the people of the world come to know you and declare your name above all names. We ask all these things in the name of your son, Jesus Christ.

Amen. Let's join together this morning in singing three songs. We're going to sing Come Thou Fount, Day by Day, and For the Beauty of the Earth.

And you'll be able to follow the lyrics on the screen. And as the worship leader leads us in these songs, may you be blessed by the words and music of these songs.

[ 7 : 25 ] Sing out loud because you're singing to the Lord, not to your computer and certainly not to anyone else. So God bless you as you worship the Lord in singing this morning.

Come Thou Fount, Every blessing tune my heart to sing Thy grace.

Streams of mercy never ceasing. Call for songs of loudest praise. Teach me some melodious song.

Praise the mountain, Fixed upon it, Mount of Thy redeeming love.

Here I raise my Ebenezer, Here by Thy great help I've come.

[ 8 : 52 ] And I hold by Thy good pleasure, Safely to arrive at home. Jesus saw me when a stranger, Wandering from the fold of God, He to rescue me from danger, Interposed His precious blood.

Oh, to grace how great a debtor, Daily I'm constrained to be, Let Thy goodness, like a feather, Mind my wandering heart to Thee, Prone to wander, Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love, Here's my heart, Lord, Take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above.

Day by day, Day by day, And with each passing moment, Strength I find, Strength I find, To me and my trials here, Trusting in the Father's wise bestow, I have no cause for worry or for fear.

Jesus' heart is kind beyond all measure, Listen to each day what it means best, Lovingly, it's part of pain and pleasure, And with each passing moment, And with each passing moment, Every day the Lord Himself is near me, Every day the Lord Himself is near me, With a special mercy for each child, All my cares He faint would bear and cheer me,

He whose name is Counselor and Power, The protection of His child and treasure, He's the charge that on Himself He lay, As Thy day thy strength shall be in measure, Is the pledge to me He has made.

[ 12 : 26 ] Help me then in every tribulation, So to trust Thy promises, O Lord, That I lose, Now face me consolation, Offering me within Thy holy word, Help me Lord, When toil and trouble meeting, That You take us from the Father's hand, One by one, One by one, The day the moment's bleeding,

Till I reach the promised land, It's a new day. For the beauty of the earth, For the beauty of the earth, For the glory of the skies, For the glory of the skies, For the beauty of the earth, For the glory of the skies, For the love which from our birth, Over and around us lies, Christ our God, to Thee we raise, This our sacrifice of praise,

This our sacrifice of praise, For the beauty of each hour, Of the day and of the night, Hill and vale and tree and flower, Sun and moon and stars of light, Christ our God, to Thee we raise, This our sacrifice of praise, For the kiss and lib doth we raise.

For a true miracle of praise, For the abuse of praise, For us praise and magnus, For the love which for oh, o and wszyscowski mode ■■■■ carboh unpacked, For when yielding of uneus■, Suker our God, through mullet damage, For the glory of His blessed Stamilgiving Christ Christ.

Christ our God to thee we raise This our sacrifice of praise Well I hope you enjoyed those songs because in so many ways our singing to God, our worship of God through singing is a sacrifice.

[ 16 : 13 ] We bring our voices that God has given us. We bring the words that the people who have written the songs and the hymns have reflected upon, have written and we are saying those words back to God.

And so in so many ways our worship singing is prayer. It is prayer. It is sacrifice. It is something we freely give back to God in worship. And so I hope you enjoy that experience no matter what it looks like even now as we do it online.

Well this morning we're continuing in our sermon series titled Spiritual Disciplines Exercise Your Faith. So how's your exercise going so far this year? How are your resolutions coming? We talked about resolutions last week.

We began our series last week with an introduction and if you missed that you can find it on our website [braemarbaptist.com](http://braemarbaptist.com) Or you can check it out. The video is also posted on our Facebook page so you can check it out there if you want to get caught up.

Well in our introduction we recognize that as followers of Jesus Christ, as his disciples, we can benefit from some tools and skills that will help us on our journey.

[ 17 : 29 ] And these tools are known as spiritual disciplines. And over the course of the next several weeks we're going to be exploring the spiritual disciplines that have guided Christians for centuries.

And some of them, as I said in our introduction, will be familiar to you. Maybe they're things that you've already had, that you already feel you have good success with, that you have a handle on.

And that's great. And others that we explore together may be new to you. And I hope that you can begin to see a benefit through those, through some new things in your spiritual journey.

We're going to start identifying the specific disciplines this morning. And we're going to start digging more deeply into them each week. As we explored last week, Christian spiritual disciplines have existed since the very earliest days of the church.

And as you can imagine, many theologians and Christian writers have explored and discussed them over time. And I also want us to remember that neither is there an exhaustive list of disciplines, neither neither, or a definitive list of disciplines.

[ 18 : 46 ] Nor are there spiritual disciplines intended to be, all be suited to every Christian. We're not looking at a list that then applies to all of us, or we're somehow required to do all of these things.

We need to remember that these are tools and guides. They're tools and guides designed or intended to help put us, help us put ourselves before God.

And to put ourselves in a state of mind and a state of heart where we can best interact with Him. Well, Christian theologian Richard Foster wrote about the spiritual disciplines more than 40 years ago.

And his exploration of them is still very highly regarded. More recently, Christian author and speaker John Ortberg, you may have heard of him and you may have heard of his writing on spiritual disciplines, or seminary professor and author Donald S. Whitney.

These men have also written about spiritual disciplines as well. And these are just a few of the folks who have done this. And their perspectives, Whitney, Ortberg, and Foster, are three of the guides.

[ 20 : 03 ] Their writing and their insights into some of the spiritual disciplines will help to guide me, help to guide us in this series. Richard Foster offers a very helpful way, in my mind, of grouping the spiritual disciplines.

He's divided them into three categories. Inward, outward, and corporate. And with each of these categories, he's identified within these categories four disciplines.

Okay, but before you begin to do sermon math and panic at the idea that our series may include 12 individual sermons, not a bad thing, by the way, I mean, 12 sermons, I'm going to remind you of something that I like to refer to as pastor's prerogative.

So I may bundle some of these, some of our discussions of disciplines together, so that we, at times, may cover more than one, or may look at more than one in a week.

And as the Spirit directs me, and as logic guides me, that will help. And the other thing, too, that I want to recognize is life happens, right?

[ 21 : 16 ] So things may happen during the course of this series that cause us to pause in the series, to focus on another topic, another issue, something of importance.

But we will cover all these spiritual disciplines together, and I think you will enjoy this journey. I hope we enjoy this journey and grow together through it, as individuals and as a church.

Does that make sense? Okay, so before we begin looking at the inward spiritual disciplines this week, I want to give you some encouragement. As John Ortberg writes, there is an immense difference between training to do something and trying to do something.

Do you hear that? There's an immense difference between training to do something and trying to do it. If you recognize times in your life when your walk with God, your relationship with Him, your sense of either closeness to or distance from Him, felt like they resulted directly from, or at least in your own mind, resulted from how well or how poorly you had personally tried to be more like Jesus.

Does that resonate with you this morning? Can you recognize a time or times in your life when you've heard a rousing sermon, maybe that's today, and felt inspired on a Sunday, or whenever you listened to a sermon, woke up on a Monday, or began your resolve immediately after hearing that, to be determined to be more patient, perhaps a better spouse, a better parent, a better friend, a more giving and generous person, more passionate about sharing your faith.

[ 23 : 08 ] And then later, sometimes it happens quickly, you began to feel exhausted and discouraged by perhaps when you saw a lack of progression and your lack of progress in trying.

You were trying to do it, and you feel that you failed. As I suggested last week, this journey is not about willpower.

It's not about a force of will and a desire to bring about change in ourselves. Yes, that's part of it. We need to have a heart that is focused on change, a heart that is focused on us drawing closer to God.

We need to be intentional about that. And that's absolutely true. But spiritual transformation, my friends, is not simply about trying harder. It's about training wisely.

And perhaps one of the most powerful illustrations of the Christian life that we find in Scripture is the Apostle Paul's suggestion that the Christian life is, what?

[ 24 : 16 ] A race. And that's not a race in the sense of a competition against others. Not at all. But that's a powerful image, isn't it? It evokes, the idea of a race invokes focus and passion and intensity, striving for God's best for us.

And at the best of times, I believe that kind of idea, that inspirational idea of a race is inspiring. It's invigorating to us.

For anyone who's done any kind of physical or athletic training, we recognize that these kinds of pursuits can be challenging. They can be difficult.

And at times, they can be discouraging. I have friends and family who are runners. Personally, I only run when chased.

But any kind of athletic training also involves sizing up the competition. And I believe that in our own spiritual journeys, all too often, we can tend to begin looking to others and comparing ourselves to them.

[ 25 : 27 ] Do you recognize that in your own life, in your own spiritual journey? Rather than focusing on the fact that our race, our spiritual journey, is just that, ours, and ours alone.

As we begin our exploration of the inward spiritual disciplines this morning, these are called inward because they're the most personal. They're the most directly related between ourselves and God, most directly connected to one-to-one.

And I believe that it's fitting that we begin this morning with meditation. Meditation. Well, as I've been reflecting on this discipline myself, I've not only wondered about the origin of the concept of meditation, but I've also reflected on the relatively negative connotations the concept of meditation has developed in many Christian circles over the years.

For example, when I say the word meditation in the context of a sermon as a pastor, do you gasp? Do you cringe? Do you think, oh no, where's he going?

Is this going to get really awkward and heretical? No, it's not. The English word meditation is derived from the old French word meditation, which came from the Latin word meditatio and the verb meditare.

[ 26 : 56 ] Yeah, you've fallen asleep now. And that word meditare, that verb means to think. To contemplate, to devise, to ponder.

Very intellectual thinking there. Perspective. The idea of meditation being an activity or a formal process dates back to the 12th century to a monk named Gugio, or Gugio II.

I'm not Italian, perhaps you can tell. And in many traditions, meditation is defined as a practice where an individual uses an approach such as mindfulness or focusing on a particular thought, object, or activity to train attention and awareness and achieve a mentally clear and emotionally calm and stable state.

Did you catch all that? Wow, what a complicated definition there, right? And it's not surprising then if that's a definition, and it does seem like a fairly simple and yet incredibly complex one.

It's not surprising then that scholars have found the idea of meditation somewhat difficult to define because it means different things to different traditions.

[ 28 : 22 ] The idea of meditation has played a central role in Buddhism and Hinduism. But the idea has also spread to non-religious contexts such as business or health.

And at its core, in many contexts, meditation suggests an idea of grounding oneself, grounding yourself. And you may have even heard of the concept of emptying your mind in connection with meditation.

I remember, as I was thinking about this, as a child, hearing older Christians, I believe it could have even been family members, talking about this idea of meditation and how incredibly dangerous it would be because it calls you to empty your mind and oh my goodness, what could happen?

Well, I found, so in light of that context, here's a description which is a little bit more and more clear, I believe, in a sense of traditional, a traditional idea of meditation.

So here's that description. Imagine that your mind is a cup full of liquid representing the tasks, distractions, and pressures of everyday life.

[ 29 : 43 ] In order to find peace, you gradually pour out the liquid by clearing your mind, calming your body, and releasing yourself from all conscious thinking, leaving yourself with a clean, empty cup.

So that's one picture of secular meditation, at least the New Age form of it. And I believe that many Christians, as I said, see that idea of emptying our minds as a kind of betrayal somehow, as our calling as followers of Christ.

And I believe this is the idea where meditation itself, the concept, has gotten a bad rap, especially for Christians. It's also worth noting that the idea of emptying ourselves may cause concern for people, because as I suggested, we may become concerned that if we empty ourselves, what could possibly come in to fill the space that we've created?

It's a valid concern. It's a valid question. So when the goal of meditation is a self-directed or self-serving quest to make ourselves better, that's the goal, I believe it can be dangerous.

I believe it can be anything but helpful in our training to grow closer to God, because remember, it's not about us. It's not about us achieving a higher level of consciousness or a perfect sense of calm merely for our own sake.

- [ 31 : 24 ] If the word meditation feels to you as something that's only really suited for monks or yoga instructors, then we need to reclaim, we need to redefine what this idea of meditation means, especially from a Christian perspective.

Because meditation is a spiritual discipline, and it's both commanded by God and modeled by godly people in Scripture. Donald Whitney does a solid job of defining this for us when he says, meditation is deep thinking.

Now this is Christian meditation. Meditation is deep thinking on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture for the purposes of understanding, application, and prayer.

I'll repeat that. Meditation is deep thinking on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture for the purposes of understanding, application, and prayer.

That's Christian meditation. And he makes the point that meditation is a constructive mental activity that fills the mind with God and His truth.

- [ 32 : 47 ] It's this deep absorption of Scripture, not just the intake of it. So to go back to the idea of an emptying a cup, Whitney gives you, gives an analogy of your mind as a cup of hot water and your intake of Scripture as being like a tea bag.

So hearing God's Word is like dipping the bag once in the water. Still not tea, right? Reading, studying, and memorizing God's Word is like dipping the tea bag multiple times.

So it's getting better, but it's probably still weak tea. But then meditating on God's Word is like immersing that tea bag, letting all the rich flavor and color change the water completely.

We call it steeping when we're making tea. Steeping yourself in the Word of God. When we meditate on Scripture, it completely colors our thinking about God.

It colors our thinking about His ways, and ultimately it will color our thinking about ourselves, our perspective on ourselves.

- [ 34 : 04 ] So let's take a moment to recognize several instances in Scripture, and there are many more. that may be your homework, is to find, look for yourself for all the instances of meditation in Scripture, where Scripture encourages us to meditate on God's Word and His truth.

But I'll share a few with us this morning. Joshua, pardon me, Joshua 1, verse 8 reminds us, do not let this book of the law, meaning Scripture, depart from your mouth.

Meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Joshua 1, 8 As he closes his letter, Paul suggests in Philippians 4, verse 8, that the best focus for our minds is whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is admirable, Paul says.

If anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about it. Meditate on such things. Again, in Romans 12, verse 2, as I mentioned briefly last week, Paul cautions us to not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed by what?

- [ 35 : 34 ] The renewing of our mind through meditation on God's word. Proverbs 22, verses 17 and 18 reminds us to pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise.

Apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips. So again, that's reflected at keeping the book of the law close on our lips, close in our heart.

Focusing on scripture then, keeping it in our minds and on our lips, having our minds renewed by it, friends, this is meditation as it was intended.

This is the spiritual discipline of meditation. And as we've seen from the way scripture frames it, this is not about just emptying our minds of worries or anxiety or clutter or chaos.

My goodness, don't we all have minds filled with that at times? This is about being disciplined and intentional about how, my voice cracked, how and with what we choose to replace all that noise.

[ 36 : 54 ] It's about an intentional replacement, an intentional transition from what is currently in our minds to replacing it with scripture in an intentional way.

So what is this approach to meditation with scripture as our focus? What does that look like in practice? Because I encourage you to try this this week. And so here's one way of approaching it.

I'll give you some ideas, some suggestions, some tips. First, make some time alone with God. That's maybe obvious. It's not necessarily about quantity.

I'm not talking about set aside four to eight hours. But it is about quality. Seek a place where your phone is not, where the TV is not.

Find a place with as few distractions as possible. Because it is about quality time with God. Take some time to calm your mind.

[ 37 : 55 ] Calm your heart. Because as I said before, as I said, I believe it was last week, you can begin intentionally to pray and then fall asleep.

So we're talking about calming your heart, calming your mind, calming your spirit. And seek to put yourself intentionally before God.

Some people can do that in their heart. They can feel like their heart is oriented towards God. God. If it's helpful, imagine yourself standing before him. Because in reality, you are standing before him every moment, every day of your life.

I find focused breathing can be helpful. And I think people hear focused breathing or controlled breathing, and that scares them too, because it feels very new agey.

But here's a helpful way to do that. You can use scripture as you do that. And when I do it, I breathe in and think in my head, be still.

[ 38 : 56 ] And I breathe out and know that I am God. Be still and know that I am God.

Your body will naturally slow down. your mind will begin to clear and you are intentionally focusing on God. Don't be afraid when you focus on God and seek to clear your mind at the same time, because you are filling your mind and your heart with God.

So once you've taken time to center your focus on God and quiet that chaos in your mind, one technique to help you meditate on scripture is to focus on a single passage, or even better, a single verse.

Whether it's something that you've read in your daily Bible reading, perhaps you've read a devotion that morning that had a verse that was connected to it, or perhaps it's a particular verse that's been meaningful to you in your life.

John 3.16 for example, or other verses, Romans 8.28, verses that are meaningful to you or are easily recalled in your mind. And as you read the verse out of your Bible, or as you reflect on the verse, seek to put an emphasis on different words in the verse.

[ 40 : 22 ] Think about changing the focus and the meaning. So for example, for God so loved the world. Think about for God so loved the world. He did it.

He was intentional about it. For God so loved the world. It was God who loved the world. It wasn't man. For God so loved the world.



How deeply. Right? For God so loved the world. He loved us. He loves us. So there's an example using a verse. Change the emphasis and see how God speaks to you through that.

Think about changing the focus and the meaning. And when, because I believe that lots of times when we're reading scripture, we may be just trying to accomplish it.

Well, today, in my 30 days of reading the Bible, I need to read 152 pages. So I better get after it. Not the ideal way to meditate on scripture, right?

[ 41 : 24 ] Getting it done is not the ideal mindset. You can also try rewriting a verse in your own words. That can be helpful. So seek to retain the meaning, obviously, of the verse, but reword it so that you understand it in a different way or in a more clear way, perhaps.

But you're digging into it. You're chewing on it. You're meditating on it. Seek to pull out the key truths that are expressed in a verse, that are expressed in a passage that you're meditating on.

What is God saying in this passage? What is God saying to you specifically? How is God speaking speaking to you through it? And as you do this, as I said, be aware that God may be speaking to you in your thoughts, in your words, in your mind.

Sometimes I believe we can be pretty quick to give ourselves credit for a moment of inspiration that comes to our minds, an aha moment, something that gives us clarity.

And actually, I believe many times, I know for me personally, that comes from God a lot of times. Sure, sometimes I get clarity in my own mind after thinking about something, but I've also experienced many times where something came to my mind that was not of my own inspiration.

[ 42 : 46 ] God is speaking. And another way of meditating over scripture, I think, can be helpful is speaking the words of scripture as though they're your personal prayer to God.

So even if you reword it into a prayer, coming personally from you to God, that's another way of reflecting on, on meditating on scripture. And so maybe that's too artsy for you, trying to rethink some of these things, trying to rewrite something.

So try practicing instead by reading the words of scripture out loud. If you're a more literal, kind of extroverted person, try that. Meditate on the word of God by reading it out loud, stating out loud the truth so that you hear God speaking to you through it.

Express your thoughts out loud as God puts them in your heart and in your mind. Always be aware of how and when God is speaking to you through his word.

When you study it, when you think about it, when you meditate on it, you're not just reading to consume information, right? God will literally speak to you through his word.

[ 44 : 05 ] And the Bible tells us that over and over and over again. And remember that if this practice of meditation is not something that deeply resonates with you, I still encourage you to try it.

Even if what I've said to you this morning about it doesn't somehow resonate with you, try it anyway. Humor me. Humor it. Humor the opportunity to try it.

Even if it feels unnatural to you at first, you're in training. This is about training, right? And you're seeking to train your habits and train your heart to align them more closely with God.

The Apostle Paul would have been intimately familiar with this concept of, he was obviously familiar with it, athletes and training. And we see that concept clearly as he encourages the believers in the Corinthian church.

Here we are combining athletes and training. We read in 1 Corinthians 9 verses 24 to 27, Do you not know that in a race all runners run, but only one gets the prize?

[ 45 : 19 ] Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly. I do not fight like a man beating the air. See that? Paul is indicating focus and purpose in our training.

Paul goes on to say, No, I beat my body and make it my slave, so that after I preach to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

This is a personal journey, personal training. Winning a race requires purpose, focus, and discipline. And Paul uses that illustration to remind us that the Christian life also requires purpose and discipline.

And these spiritual disciplines that we'll be exploring throughout our series together will equip us, will help us, will guide us to run this race towards eternal reward, towards our eternal reward.

[ 46 : 37 ] With focus, with stamina, with endurance, God will encourage you in this journey. If you feel discouraged as you seek to draw closer to God, tell him that.

he understands and he will help you. So I encourage us all, don't take training lightly. Don't take this training lightly.

But engage with these tools, engage with these guides that God himself has given to us to keep us on this path of personal transformation.

salvation. As we work towards not working out our salvation, not by checking off boxes, but by seeking to put ourselves before God, to seeking to draw nearer to God, and to seek that ultimate goal of spending eternity with God and with Jesus.

Amen. My friends, our benediction this morning is one of my favorites, and I believe we can indeed call it a classic.

[ 47 : 55 ] It's found in the book of Numbers 6, verses 24 to 26. The Lord bless you and keep you, my friends.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance on you and give you peace.

My friends, I encourage you to try meditation this week. Try engaging with God and his word in this way. And may you be blessed as you do that.

Go in peace and have a great week. God bless you.