

Spiritual Disciplines: Submission

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning and welcome to our online service for Sunday, February 28th, 2021. My name is Kent Dixon and I'm the lead pastor of Bramard Baptist Church here in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Welcome, however you're joining us this morning. If you're with us here live on Facebook this morning or you're tuning in later in the week, welcome as you join us and welcome as we worship God, as we recognize God, as we praise Him, as we reflect on His Word together this morning.

And some great concepts from the Bible that we've been studying over the past weeks. Well, I want to welcome you wherever you're at.

Come this morning feeling welcome. Don't feel a burden of needing to conform, needing to fit in. If you've had a rough week, that's okay.

If you're struggling in the midst of this pandemic and what these restrictions and the guidelines and things mean for us, that's okay. And if you're feeling somehow less than what you feel you need to be according to your own measurement of your faith or your own measurement of, I'm not a good enough Christian or I'm not in the place with God where I need to be, that's okay.

[1 : 1 5] My friends, that's what grace is about. And so welcome this morning and receive God's grace. Receive His great love for you in this way and in this time and in this place.

Let's pray this morning. Father God, we thank you that your amazing, unfathomable love has been poured out for us at the cross and poured into us by the Holy Spirit.

We want to taste and experience more of the depth and breadth and length and height of your amazing love. Help us to walk by faith, Lord.

Help us to endure in suffering. Help us to own our need of you. Help us to fully embrace your Son, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.

So, Lord, pour out your love into our hearts in increasing measure by the power of your Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[2 : 1 5] And it's in His name we pray. Amen. Well, we're going to join together in singing three songs this morning. I am thine, O Lord.

I need thee every hour. And I am resolved. And I am resolved. You've heard before. I like it and I keep using it periodically because I think it's a great song.

So, again, I am thine, O Lord. I need thee every hour. And I am resolved. So, we're going to be, through these songs, we're going to be just exploring that we are surrendering ourselves to God.

We are submitting ourselves to Him. We are recognizing our need for Him. And resolving that we will follow Him. That we will return to Him and seek Him in every moment.

So, God bless you, my friends, as you sing these songs. The worship leader will lead us and the lyrics will appear on the screen. So, God bless you as you sing.

[3 : 1 9] I am thine, O Lord.

I have heard thy voice. And it's all thy love to be. But I long to rise in the arms of faith.
 And be closer, John, to thee. Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord.
 To the cross where thou hast died. Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord.
 To thy precious bleeding side. Come to pray, me now.

[4 : 25] To thy first Lord. By the power of grace divine. That my soul of God.
 That my soul of God. That my soul of God. And my will be lost in high. Draw me nearer,
 nearer, nearer, blessed Lord.
 To thy cross where thou hast died. Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord.
 To thy cross where thou hast died. To thy flesh, shall we side. Draw me nearer, nearer,
 nearer, blessed Lord. To thy cross where thou hast died.
 Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord. To thy cross where thou hast died.

[5 : 30] Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord.
 To thy cross where thou hast died. I need Thee every hour, most gracious Lord.
 No tender voice like Thine can peace afford. I need Thee, oh, I need Thee.
 Every hour I need Thee. Oh, bless me now, my Savior. I come to Thee.
 I need Thee every hour, stay Thou nearby.

[6 : 56] Temptations lose their power when Thou art nigh. I need Thee, oh, I need Thee.
 Every hour I need Thee. Oh, bless me now, my Savior. Savior, I come to Thee.
 I need Thee every hour, enjoy your pain.
 Come quickly and abide, O life is me. I need Thee every hour, I need Thee.
 I need Thee every hour, I need Thee. Oh, bless me now, my Savior. I come to Thee. I
 need Thee every hour, I need Thee.

[8 : 10] I need Thee every hour, I need Thee. I need Thee every hour, I need Thee. Oh, bless me
 now, my Savior.
 Every hour, I need Thee every hour, I need Thee. I need Thee every hour, I need Thee.
 Oh, bless me now, my Savior. Savior, I come to Thee.
 I am resolved, no longer to linger, drawn by the world's delights.
 Things that are higher, things that are nobler, these have allured my sight. And I will
 hasten to Him, hasten so glad and free.
 Jesus, greatest highest, I will come to Thee. I am resolved to go to the Savior, leaving my
 sins.

[9 : 34] He is the true one, He is the true one, He is the just one. He hath the words of life. And I
 will hasten to Him, hasten so glad and free.
 Jesus, greatest highest, I will come to Thee. I will have a great day.
 I will have a great day. I will have a great day. Well, I hope you enjoyed those songs that
 we just sang together this morning. You know, as I've said before, over the months when
 we've been online, I can imagine people singing to their computers.
 I can hear your voices. I can feel your praise to God. And God seeks our praise. God
 loves our praise. God actually commands our praise. And deserves it beyond our
 imagining.

So, whether we're online, whether we're in person, whether we're singing or praising God in our own, in our own place, in our own quiet time, that's just, it's all so beautiful, so valuable.

[10 : 52] And so, I hope that as you engage online in praise and worship in this way through singing, that it's meaningful to you. Well, we're continuing in our sermon series titled, Spiritual Disciplines Exercise Your Faith.

How's your exercise regimen going so far this year? We're now towards the end of February, almost the end of February, the beginning of March, heading into spring. Is your physical experience, your physical exercise regimen, your health regimen, your eating, your diet regimen, how is that going for you?

Well, I hope it's going well. You know, people I talk to you are encouraged during this time by getting some exercise, by focusing this nervous energy that we have during this time onto positive pursuits.

So, you know, these spiritual disciplines that we've been exploring together over the past three weeks, it's about, we've been learning, it's about training, not trying. And so, it's about engaging in these things that we're learning and putting them into practice.

As we transition into that, how are your, how's your work on your spiritual disciplines going? Have you been practicing some of these things? Have you been working them into your relationship with God, into your time with God?

[12 : 16] Have you been reflecting on them? Well, if you haven't, I encourage you to do that. And if you have, I want to encourage you to keep going. To keep going. To keep going. To keep running this race.

To keep training. Because the prize is well worth it. And the journey is such a rich and encouraging one if we engage with God.

If we draw closer to God and seek His, seek His face. Seek His time. Seek His will. Seek His intention for our lives during this time.

Rather than wasted time. Rather than sitting back and, and you know, wringing our hands and being worried. We can be focusing our time on God.

Focusing time, our time on others. And caring for them. And seeing how they're doing. So I encourage you as you train. To be intentional about it.

[13 : 12] To focus on growing in the areas that God may be calling you to grow in. And in this series that we've recognized that as followers of Jesus Christ.

As His disciples. There are some tools and skills that we can learn. That we can employ. That we can engage in in our lives. In our walk with God. And these tools are known as spiritual disciplines.

Well, spiritual disciplines as we've talked about each week. Are intended to help put us before God. Put us in a state of mind.

And a state of heart. Where we can best interact with Him. Where we can best hear His voice. Well, we're continuing with our exploration of the outward spiritual disciplines this week.

These are the disciplines, the practices. They're most visible to others. And so today, we're going to focus on the discipline of submission.

[14 : 13] But before we explore this more deeply together. I want to sidetrack just for a second. And I'd like us to reflect on something. I think we'd all agree we're living in a time when I believe we can all recognize some clear divisions in our society.

We can even recognize divisions within the church. Within the broader church, I mean. It's a time when our view of submission, particularly to earthly authorities, is being tested and questioned in so many ways.

And I'm not going to get into the weeds on this issue. Because I mean this literally. God knows it would take us off track. God knows it would take our focus away from Him.

But we are going to consider, just briefly this morning, an important perspective we need to remember as followers of Christ. My friends, are we taking up a cause rather than taking up our cross?

Some may argue that they're one and the same. I agree that as a follower of Christ, we need to take up causes. But I don't necessarily agree that that is the main focus that we're called to.

[15 : 38] Because as you stand up for a particular cause, especially as someone who calls themselves a follower of Christ, we need to be sure that the specific issue we've decided to plant our flag on aligns with Jesus' overall call for us to take up our cross.

Excuse me. Author Scott McKnight summarizes my view on this so astutely in one of his books. He says, churches, and I believe here that we can use the word Christians in here as well.

Churches that follow Jesus don't simply take up a cause for one specific group. They develop a culture in which they hear the cries of all the distressed, all the wounded, and respond with compassion.

This is about culture and taking up our cross, not about individual causes. So particularly in these times, are you prioritizing what you may believe are your rights?

Are you prioritizing those things over the rights, the needs of others? My friends, let us be people who carry our cross, not simply a cause.

[17 : 11] So submission. What's your understanding of that word? Do you have one? And if you do understand it, what's your connection to it?

What's your perspective on it? Well, maybe you associate it with wedding vows. I've been doing a lot of premarital sessions with couples lately. I've officiated some weddings lately, and I have more coming up this year.

And so maybe the idea of submission somehow fits into your understanding of marriage. And we could unpack all of that again one day. Maybe it comes with some idea of an antiquated swearing allegiance from perhaps a serf or someone in the more broad community swearing their allegiance to a ruler, to a king, to a lord, something like that.

Small I lord as in a feudal lord in medieval times. Or maybe the idea of submission for you means controlling or influencing someone else.

Or being influenced by someone else. And as those of you who know me will recognize, I'm someone who values words. I value language.

[18 : 27] And an important aspect of that for me is understanding. I'm going to suggest to you this morning that for most people, the word submission may actually have negative connotations.

It may have baggage. And we're going to look at that. So let's begin there. Why is that a bad word? Why is it that submission seems to be a bad word?

Bad word for people? Well, what's the baggage that seems to be associated with it? To begin with, the idea of healthy submission does not look like domination or subjugation or oppression.

That's not a healthy view of submission. And yet I believe we can see how a deficient view of submission could go directly to any of those places, right?

By submitting to someone, you are under their control. You're being dominated by them. You're being oppressed by them. You can see how that concept might come to mind.

[19 : 42] And I also believe people may associate the word submission too directly, too closely with another word. Submissive.

Submissive. Is that where you go in your mind? Is that maybe what you've experienced in submitting to someone else? Do you feel like you're being submissive? Well, what's wrong with being submissive?

If you're a dog lover, so most of you will know that I am a dog lover. We are currently dogless in our life. We are mourning the loss of two beloved dogs that we had for many years.

And I'm healing and I'm getting closer to the point where I need pause in my life again. P-A-W-S. I need a dog around.

So if you're not a dog lover this morning, I will pray for you. But if you've owned a dog yourself, you're likely familiar with how dogs instinctively recognize, it's hardwired into them, the idea of submission.

[20 : 54] And their behavior, either towards their owner, another dog, a potential threat, is to behave submissively. So dogs may drop their ears down or pull their ears back.

Often their tail drops down from being up in a wag. It drops down and they pull it tightly into their back end. And some may even roll over onto their back.

And as a child, I remember thinking how cute it was that a dog would roll over onto their back and you could scratch their belly and they seemed to like that. But eventually, I came to realize that that was the ultimate act in submissive behavior, in submission to their owner or to a threat.

The dog is essentially, by rolling on their back, saying, not always, I want to play. But they're saying, ultimately, you can kill me if you want.

I'm making myself vulnerable to you. I'm submitting to you. And as well, they're probably saying, gee, I hope you don't kill me. Because we could be friends. But when you think of the idea of being submissive, what other concepts come to mind?

[22 : 12] Submission or being submissive? Maybe you think, you know, there's some more potential baggage here. Maybe you think of being timid or lacking confidence.

Maybe you think of being controlled by someone else. Or maybe even more than that, you think of somehow groveling or being humiliated by someone.

Well, it likely won't surprise you, but I believe, as I have believed with many of the other spiritual disciplines we've explored in this series, that we need to redeem or somehow reclaim our perspective on this idea of submission.

The idea of submission is a key concept in the Bible. Perhaps even one of the main concepts. I would argue it is the main concept, in fact. And we could easily spend some time exploring all the various relationships in which the Bible considers submission.

Throughout Scripture we recognize, particularly in the language of Paul, in Paul's writing, servants submitting to masters, children submitting to their parents, wives submitting to their husbands, and by the way, husbands in turn submitting to their wives.

[23 : 30] That's so easily missed, but it's there. Followers of Christ being called to submit to earthly authority. But all of these acts of submission, echoing throughout every possible relationship one might have considered in that day, and in contemporary times, I would argue as well, they're anchored in one place.

And this is why I would argue that submission is key in the Bible. In Mark 8, chapter 8, verses 34 to 35, pardon me, Jesus says, If anyone would come after me, and he means there, if anyone would follow me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

There's taking up our cross again. And here's such a powerful example of how God's plan turns our own completely on its head.

In verse 35, Jesus continues, For, so if you're going to follow me, he says, For, here's the coming result of that, For, whoever wants to save his life will lose it.

But whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. The original audience of the Gospel of Mark would have known what it meant to take up a cross.

[25 : 09] They would have been intimately familiar with that idea. Many of us would as well, because taking up a cross would have meant execution, would have meant death.

And as part of that process, the accused would carry their own cross to the place where they would be executed. We read about that in the crucifixion story of Jesus.

As we get closer to Easter, that will be more and more in the forefront of our minds. In this act, in this act of carrying their own cross, they were submitting to the power of Rome.

They were essentially submitting to the power and recognizing the power of Rome to take everything from them, up to and including their life.

Jesus used these words, not just out of convenience or because they were familiar, but he used them to paint a powerful picture.

[26 : 13] That following him would require the ultimate act of submission. Even being willing to give up our lives.

Jesus wasn't saying that a life lived for him would be without joy or pleasure. Not at all. But he was saying that following him moment by moment, particularly when the future may be uncertain or bleak, would may or would require sacrifice, would require us to sacrifice potentially everything.

But that's such a contradictory concept in our minds, isn't it? And we recognize that people at that time didn't even completely understand.

How can we save our lives by losing them, right? In that basic sense, it doesn't make sense. But Jesus was telling us that even in the ultimate sacrifice, what we gain by living for him and for the gospel has far greater value than our earthly lives.

Can you recognize and appreciate that? My friends, submission to Jesus is where it all begins for us.

[27 : 37] But this kind of submission is counter to a common human understanding. In Mark 9, verse 35, Jesus emphasized this non-traditional idea of submission again.

As we've recognized before, the disciples didn't always get it, right? So, for men and women who followed Jesus closely, who were in his presence regularly, who heard his teaching firsthand, if they didn't get it, we can understand that it's okay if we don't always either.

But in Mark 9, verse 35, Jesus emphasizes this again. Sitting down, it says, Jesus called the twelve, called his disciples, and said, anyone who wants to be first must be the very last and the servant of all.

So, if you want to be the best, you need to start by putting yourself last. How contrary to our human understanding of getting ahead, right?

Hymn writer George Matheson captured this counter-cultural submission. He captured this idea of fulfillment through self-denial so beautifully in the hymn he wrote, Make me a captive, Lord.

[29 : 04] I'll read you just two short passages from that hymn. Make me a captive, Lord. And then I shall be free. Force me to surrender up my sword.

And I shall a conqueror be. I sink in life's alarms when by myself I stand. Imprison me within thine arms.

And strong shall be my hand. How beautiful. In submission, we realize ultimate strength, ultimate power, ultimate love in God alone.

Submission to God is about letting go of control. It's about surrendering ourselves to his will and his plan for our lives.

It's about letting go of our stubbornness and pride, but always seeking humility over recognition. But Jesus didn't only set this standard of submission for us.

[30 : 21] Friends, he lived it. We see this discipline of submission lived out in every aspect of Jesus' life. Jesus was the perfect example of self-sacrifice.

He recognized the Father's authority first over anything resembling his own authority. He cared for others first.

He served others first. He always humbled himself, even in the face of hostility and humiliation. We also recognize in Philippians 2, verse 8, that the submissive example of Jesus had no limitations.

We read there, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Jesus was always clear that the life that he lived, his life of submission, was the perspective that he intended for us to have in our own lives as well.

[31 : 38] In John 13, verse 15, Jesus said, I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you.

So what should this submissive example of Jesus look like in our own lives? Well, we've recognized that we begin by submitting to God, day by day, and even moment by moment if necessary.

Begin your day by connecting with God, submitting yourself to his will, his will for you in the day ahead.

Do it every day. End your day in an attitude, I've said this before, an attitude of gratitude. Reflect over on what Jesus has done, what God has done for you through the day, what he has shown you, what he's taught you.

Submit yourself in sleep to him as well. Submit yourself to his protection, his healing over you, your mind and your body as you rest.

[32 : 54] How should submission be reflected in our relationships with other people? Well, Paul had a very clear grasp of this, and it's reflected over and over through his writing.

In Philippians 2, verse 3, Paul gives us some ground rules. I almost said ground rules. Ground rules.

As we read that we're to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves.

We almost need that written on our mirror or wherever we see every morning. In humility, value others above ourselves.

Sometimes that's hard. We get into self-protection mode, self-justification mode, me first mode. And submitting ourselves, humbling ourselves, putting our interest second to others, doesn't always come naturally, does it?

[34 : 12] Can you recognize that you don't always need to have your own way? By yielding to the authority of God and recognizing his authority over us, we're actually free.

We're free to let go of defending ourselves, protecting ourselves. We can be free to let go of resentment and bitterness over our circumstances, or how we've been treated by others.

We become free to see others as who God intended them to be, who God created them to be. Friends, everyone is a creation of God.

Everyone is loved by God. Not just you. Not just me. But everyone. In Ephesians 5 verse 21, Paul reminds us that we are, why should we submit ourselves?

We're to submit to one another, out of reverence for Christ. Because of Jesus, because of his model of submission, because we submit willingly to him, we're to submit to one another as well.

[35 : 37] So what does that mean? What does that mean to submit to one another? Well, to put it simply, it means thinking about other people, and their needs, and their interests, their well-being, before your own.

Can you consider that? Can you do that? God bless you if you do that in your life, and I know it's not always easy. But my friends, we are called to do that.

Even if it means that we have to make a sacrifice to do it. Even if we have to give something up, to protect, to defend, to provide for the best interests of someone else.

We're called to do it. So my friends, I encourage you to reflect on submission. Renew your daily submission to God.

Obey his call to let go of your pride and your self-interest. Seek to put other people and their needs before your own.

[36 : 54] And ask God to reveal to you those to whom he is calling you to submit.

Amen. Our benediction this morning, my friends, comes from Hebrews chapter 13, verses 20 and 21.

Now, May the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good, that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen. My friends, go in the peace of Christ and under the protection and blessing of God.

Have a great week.