

Spiritual Disciplines: How to Grow Strong in Your Walk with God | Bible Teaching

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[0:00] Tonight we're looking at spiritual disciplines. It's a term that means different elements in our lives that bring growth. And so you see there the truth that it is our walk with God.

And they're the notes for people that might be watching online, QR code and the URL. Spiritual disciplines, it talks about the disciplined life that we are meant to live, disciplined godliness, our walk with God.

And we're disciples, so you've got the word discipline there. There's a certain discipline to the Christian walk. And you can think of the Christian life as being like a long race or a battle.

Of course, we're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And as that verse tells us there, Ephesians 2, 8 through 9, it's by grace through faith.

It's not of yourselves, it's the gift of God. So all of these things we're talking about, they're for saved people. It's not that they save us, our works don't save us. But once we are saved, God wants us to be his workmanship, like it reads on there, verse 10 of Ephesians 2.

[1:04] We are his workmanship. We're created unto good works. So he wants us to walk in good works, to have that walk. And the spiritual disciplines are like the deliberate daily habits that can train us to grow as a Christian.

And so we pursue these spiritual disciplines. And it's not out of compulsion, not out of duty, but because we desire to know our Lord and be transformed. We want to grow because it's his will for us to grow and to serve, to know him, to love him, to delight in him.

And it's growing in that deeper intimacy with God. So you see other verses there like Titus 3, 5. It's not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us.

So I just wanted to underline that tonight. These works, these activities, our discipleship, it's not about our salvation. It's about our sanctification. It's what follows on.

Once we've trusted Christ as our Lord and Saviour, that's our growing in that faith, in our walk with God, in that intimacy with God. And of course, our Lord tells us that we should take up our cross and follow him.

[2:08] There's a certain self-denial. There's a discipline there. Some of these disciplines can be challenging, can be hard for us, but it's all intended for our growing. And you see, in 1 Timothy 4, Paul talks to Timothy and he says to exercise yourself unto godliness.

He says, bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things. You see the comparison there between physical discipline, like going to the gym, which is the meaning of the word exercise.

It's strictly meaning the English word gymnasium comes from that Greek word translated exercise. There's that bodily exercise and then there's this spiritual exercise, these spiritual disciplines.

So that's what we're going to be talking about tonight. When you think about an athlete, they go into the gym, they exercise, they build up the muscles and the strength. They do that through effort and purpose and repetition.

It's the same with some of these spiritual disciplines. The more we engage in them, the stronger our spiritual muscles can be. So that's the kind of picture, if you like, of what we're talking about.

[3:16] And again, spiritual disciplines, they don't earn God's love, but they do help us walk more closely with him as we grow in that walk of faith. So the first discipline, if you like, the first point there, number one, is the Bible.

Of course, the Bible is essential for our foundation. And you see the different elements there, hearing, reading, studying, meditating, memorising.

And the Lord Jesus says, So some of the things we should do with the Bible is we should hear the word of God.

Faith cometh by hearing, hearing by the word of God. God feeds his people through faithful preaching, teaching in the church. As we attend, we'll grow. As we attend faithfully, like we're exhorted to.

As we listen, as we take notes, it's a good habit to get in the habit of taking notes. Little things might jump out at you. You can take notes and read them later and study further as you take notes of scriptures and what we mention and learn.

[4:24] And be like the Bereans. They search the words daily to see if these things were so. They verified what they heard. So when anyone preaches, whoever's behind the pulpit here or in any church or any teaching that you might tune into, that you want to search the scriptures, check it out, make sure it lines up.

And so hearing the word is the first one. And the second point there is reading the word. Paul tells Timothy, give attendance to reading. Read the word of God.

It's really important. Job said, I've esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

There was one missionary, I think he said words to the effect, it's Bible before breakfast.

It's like, it's more important than my breakfast is to get the Bible, to have that daily feed. So make a systematic habit if you can, a daily habit of reading the word.

Have a plan that works for you to take time to maybe work through the whole Bible or parts, topics, bit by bit, book by book.

[5:28] However it works for you to stay steady and get that habit of reading the word. Next one, studying the word. Paul tells Timothy, study to show thyself approved unto God.

There's a truth where there's a whole resource here. There's 66 books to study, to get your teeth into it. And it says, a workman needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

When you study the Bible, you can ask things to help you with your study. For example, who is it talking about? What is it talking about?

When is the scripture? Is it Old or New Testament? Where is the verse located? And why is it teaching us something? And how can we learn?

So there's all those various questions, who, what, when, where, why, how. And compare scripture with scripture as well. The Bible is its own best interpreter as you cross-reference.

[6:27] And don't just go with one verse at random or in isolation, but take the whole context of the word of God. Become a student of the Bible. Write down what you learn.

Have your own system. Next point is memorising the word. The psalmist says, thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. It's the greatest protection when we're faced with temptation or situations and questions of life, to have the word hidden in your heart, to go to the word and to bring it to your mind, bring it to your mouth.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. It's a truth that the Bible can dwell in our hearts. And, of course, the Lord Jesus defeated Satan with the words, it is written.

It's like a weapon that we have. And when temptation or discouragement comes, we've got the word of God as that sword that we can take. And we can start with one verse a week, maybe, to memorise.

I know it was one thing that I really appreciated as a young person, as well as a young Christian, was starting to get a Bible memory habit. So write down little cards.

[7:36] You can make little cards that can fit in your pocket and pull them out when you've got an idle moment. And read the word to yourself so that you start to lodge it in your mind and you remember it.

And it's going to be a great resource for your life to memorise the word of God. Next point of the Bible is to meditate on the word as well.

Psalm 1, the blessed man, it says that his delight is in the law of the Lord. In his law doth he meditate day and night. It's going to be like that tree planted by the river of water. His delight is to

meditate.

Meditate. And of course meditate, Bible meditation, it's not like Eastern meditation where they blank their minds, but it's filling your mind with the word of God. It's Bible meditation that you're meditating on the word of God.

You're not emptying your mind, you're filling your mind with God's word. Joshua 1, likewise he's told, meditate therein day and night. Meditate in the word of God. And then the psalmist again, Psalm 119.

[8:39] Oh, how I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day. Thy testimonies are my meditation. So meditate on the word of God. In other words, take the scripture, dwell on it, read it through, repeat it to yourself, read it carefully, prayerfully, try to get the sense of it spiritually.

What is God showing me about himself, about sin, about me, about the Saviour? So meditate on the word of God. So you've got there hearing, reading, studying, memorising, meditating.

The next discipline you could think about, and this is not exhaustive. I had various lists I saw of these spiritual disciplines. In fact, there's whole big long lists of them.

So I've tried to kind of cull it down a bit. And some lists are longer, some are shorter. But these are obvious ones, of course, the Bible. The next one, prayer. Prayer is a discipline.

You could think of prayer, private prayer, family prayer, persistent prayer, fervent prayer. And many scriptures, of course, we could talk about prayer. Really, it's our breathing, isn't it?

[9:44] It's our life to have that connection, that communication with the Lord. It tells us that men ought always to pray and not to faint. It says pray without ceasing.

It says continuing instant or constant in prayer. And then of our Lord, we see his own example where the Lord Jesus, he prayed early, long, hard.

It says that he got up early, a great while before day. He went out and departed into a solitary place, and there he prayed. He gave us the pattern too.

Of course, the Lord's Prayer, which people like to use as a guide. It's not meant to be necessarily recited, although that can be helpful.

But it's more as a model. It's more as a pattern of the kind of things to pray about, how we can pray. It's a guide. And we can use that as well as we follow the pattern of the Lord's Prayer.

[10:40] Another example in the notes, it talks about a four-word guide to prayer. And it's the acronym ACTS, A-C-T-S. So adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication.

So adoration, when you come to prayer, you adore the Lord. It's worship, isn't it? You honour him. Adoration. Then you see confession. You bring your needs to him. If you've had some sin, you want to bring that to confess that to him and get things right to ask his help there with sin.

Then confession. Then thanksgiving. You want to give him thanks and praise and thank him for something. Be grateful. And then supplication. It talks about asking God to supply. So it's more about asking for your needs.

So it's almost like adoration first, confession, getting things right, thanking him, and then supplication. Then you ask him, Lord, this is my need. It's a good order to pray.

Just a guide. And you see there, Matthew 6, verse 6, of course, private prayer. There's a principle of going into your closet.

[11:49] Having that personal time, that private time. A regular time. Morning is often best. A quiet place. Maybe taking a prayer list of things. People you've got on your heart to pray for.

Different needs that you're aware of. And as a church, we've got a prayer email chain. You can join as well. So you can be included. Not only for your prayers. To make your needs known.

But also to pray for others. To pray for one another. And of course, pray through scripture as well.

Another principle about prayer too. Is having that family time of prayer. That is the ideal.

To have that time in the home. To pray. To pray as family members together. We see the Bible talks about teaching your children. When you're sitting. When you're walking.

When you're lying down. When you're rising up. You're sharing the word of God. You've got that prayerfulness. That spiritual element. And as Joshua declared. As for me and my house.

[12:44] We will serve the Lord. Think of that family Bible time that you can have. That's going to build a strong, godly home. Next point is persistent and fervent prayer as well.

In your notes there. It talks about some examples. Parables of the friend at midnight. The unjust judge. That persistency of prayer. That there's examples there of praying. And keeping on praying. You've got the example here of Elijah. In James 5. It says of him. The effectual fervent prayer. Of a righteous man. Availeth much.

Elijah he prayed. He prayed seven times. Before the rain came. So there's a time. At times you've got to pray. And keep on praying. Jacob wrestled all night with God.

In a picture of prayer. The Lord Jesus himself. He prayed three times. In Gethsemane. So sometimes you've got to pray. And keep on praying. Pray and pray through. So the discipline of the Bible.

[13:41] The discipline of prayer. The third one. The discipline of fasting. It's something we don't maybe do that much. In the scheme of things. But it is a godly practice to fast.

Of course fast and pray. I mean it's one thing just to abstain from food. But really biblical fasting is not only just abstaining from food. That would be just like having a diet.

But it's actually fasting and praying. And the Lord Jesus talks about that. In Matthew 6. Where he's talking to the Pharisees. They made a big show of it. He says don't do it to put on a show.

He says do it unto thy father which is in secret. Do it privately, secretly. It's one of those things that you just. It's something between you and the Lord. That you might abstain from eating.

So you can pray. And the Lord Jesus assumed that his disciples would fast. He says when you fast. Not if. So there is that sense where. It's something that we could see as a spiritual thing to do.

[14:44] And it helps to humble the flesh. And it helps us to sharpen our spiritual focus. And we see the example there of Mark 9.29.

Where some spiritual power comes from fasting as well. In that occasion there Mark 9.29. So the discipline of fasting. You can start simple.

Maybe even just one meal at a time. One meal or one day. It's good of course to be wise. Because some people they might go on a long fast. Where they abstain from food.

But you want to still drink water. Normally you would drink water. Because there's only so long before. That can affect you. So you want to be wise about it too.

Maybe just research that for yourself. And you can use hunger as a reminder to pray. It can help you to go to prayer. And again keep it private. So the discipline of fasting.

[15:39] Next one. Discipline of worship. Worship. The Lord Jesus in John 4.24. He says that the Father seeks people to worship him. And it tells us there that we should worship him in spirit and in truth.

The discipline of worship. Think of private worship. There's occasion there for example in the Psalms of David. It says of him that his soul thirsts for God.

His flesh was longing for God. He had that hunger to pray. That hunger to worship. And you see also how worship is private.

When no one else is looking. It's between you and the Lord. You can have the words like David there in Psalm 34. I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

That private praising and worship. And then there's the corporate worship too. Psalm 122.1. I was glad when they said unto me. Let us go into the house of the Lord. And when we get together.

[16:43] We can sing together. We can worship together. We can give. We can listen. We can learn. We can pray. And we can participate with our whole heart. We can cultivate relationships as well.

That sense of corporate worship. There's a blessing that comes from that discipline of worship.

Next one. We think of the discipline of stewardship. So giving. Of time.

Of talents. Of treasure. And the stewardship. The principle that we're all stewards. In other words. We've all been given things into our charge. That we have responsibility for.

We're all stewards. We all have things to take care of. That God's put into our care. And there's the principle that stewards are meant to be faithful.

So you see there with stewardship. The stewardship of time. Ephesians 5.16. Time. Redeeming the time. The Bible says to number our days.

[17:39] To apply our hearts to wisdom. Really every minute is a gift isn't it? We want to use every bit of our time wisely. To budget for eternal priorities as well. To redeem the time.

In other words limit. Time wasters. Is our time just getting fritzed away before we know it? And we haven't actually used it wisely. Use it well.

Use it for God. A steward of your time. Next one there you see the stewardship of talents. Romans 12 talks about all kinds of spiritual gifts. And really every believer has a gift.

Has gifts. And so when you've been given something that you're able to do. To use for the Lord's glory. Use it for God's glory. Use those spiritual gifts in your church.

Discover your gifts. Serve God faithfully. Where God has placed you. And be faithful and accountable. If people are interested. We have got a little spiritual gift inventory.

[18:35] That Pastor Adam put together. I think there's a few of them in that cupboard. Just where Don is. That it helps you just as a guide. To work through. Where you might feel that you've got ability.

Or you've got. Some leading. Anything. Then it can guide you as to the spiritual gifts that you might have. And you can use that to cultivate those spiritual gifts.

Of course it's a spiritual thing. Inventories can only just give you a guide. But it can be helpful to think. How can I serve God? What's God given me to do that I can do? That I can serve him.

And bless the church with those gifts. Those talents. And then the next one. The stewardship of treasure as well. Of course we are encouraged to give bountifully.

Not grudgingly. God loves a cheerful giver. We see the truth of giving cheerfully. Consistently. Proportionately. And to trust the Lord with our finances. And it shows our faith.

[19:34] Our love. So the discipline of stewardship. Next one. Not the discipline of soul winning or evangelism. The Bible tells us. He that winneth souls is wise.

It's a wise thing to do. To share the gospel. To tell others of the saviour. There's an eternal dimension to it. That some of the people that you've reached. With the gospel truth.

People that have trusted Christ. Through your outreach. You'll see them in heaven. You'll see them in glory. All for the glory of God. And of course we're told.

To go into all the world. Preach the gospel. To every creature. To everyone. And you could say. Really that commission is for all of us. It tells us. How shall they hear without a preacher?

And there's a truth in a sense. That we're all called to go into all the world. And preach the gospel. To every creature. So in a sense. Every believer is a preacher. And Paul says.

[20:29] Well unto me if I preach not the gospel. It's something that we've got a responsibility to do. And think about. How can we share the gospel? You could find different ways.

Different kind of models you can use to share the gospel. I like the Romans road type method. But there's lots of other methods. And you can develop your own pattern. Different Bible verses.

That lead people through. To see that they're a sinner. To see that they need a saviour. And to trust the Lord. To call upon him. To receive his gift of salvation. And so there's different kind of tips.

We could give you along that line. Because we're not going to cover it in depth here tonight. But if you want other information on. How you can witness. We could give you some guidance on that.

Give you some suggestions on that too.

See how you can turn conversations into soul winning conversations. To share the gospel naturally. Think about how can I carry even like a gospel tract. Or even drop a gospel tract.

[21:28] Or put a gospel tract in a letter box. There's different ways for yourself. That you might feel more able to take those steps. To gradually become more confident.

And to pray for lost people as well. Invite them to church. But of course it's really not so much inviting them to church. It's inviting them to know the saviour. That's what matters. And keeping your heart aflame with that burden for souls.

It's a good thing to have that discipline of soul winning. Of evangelism. Next one you can think of is the discipline of biblical separation. And separation is not something that's meant to be weird.

It's about being holy. And it's about really honouring the Lord with your life. And of course these truths here. Of not being unequally yoked together with unbelievers. To rather be separate.

To not hang around with those that might be. Where there might be a compromise to your testimony. Now that's not to say as Christians. Of course we want to reach those who don't know the saviour.

[22:28] We want to reach the lost. So it's not meaning that we're isolated from lost people. But it's just that we would be guarded about close friendships with lost people.

Because that could be a hindrance to our testimony. It talks about be not conformed to this world. But rather be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

It's that truth where we don't want to be conformed to the world. And the world's thinking. And also we should love not the world. Neither the things that are in the world. So it's not that we don't want to be compromising our walk with God.

By worldliness that's going to consume us. And take us away from God's will. And holiness it is something that's commanded for us. Of course personal separation.

With our lifestyle. With our friendships. Our entertainment. Our habits. And then ecclesiastical separation. As a church we want to be separated. From that which is false doctrine. And that sense of being really separated unto our Lord as well.

[23:28] Not just separated from. But we want to honour our Lord. The object is to glorify God. It's not that we're some kind of holy huddle. Or some isolated, you know, occultic operation.

But we want to honour our Lord. That's the objective. Is to honour him. And reach the lost. We're in the world but we're not of it. So there's that balancing at times. The next one is the discipline of stillness and watchfulness.

You could call it different things. But essentially that thought of, hey, we should be still and know that he is God. That sense of take time for the Lord to give him glory.

As the Lord himself, he went to a solitary place to pray. The psalmist says, be still and know that I am God. That sense of stillness, you know, in this world where it's hyper-connected and everything's so full on and everything's so busy.

And there's not a lot of silence. There's a lot of noise. A lot of distractions. Phones and you name it. There's so many distractions that would sometimes take away from hearing his voice.

[24:37] So we want to be training ourselves to hear his voice and put aside the distractions that would hinder that. And also the thought of watchfulness.

The Bible says, be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. There's a need for spiritual discernment.

We need vigilance. We've got to be watchful. We should watch and pray, as it reads there in Matthew 26, 41, as well. Watch and pray. That need to take time to pray.

Take time to seek after God. And we are under attack. That's why we need to be vigilant. We need to exercise vigilance. In the notes there you can see different ways to be vigilant.

Top of page three there. Areas requiring vigilance. So the heart, it talks about guarding the heart. It says, keep thy heart with all diligence. Think about your heart.

[25:37] Watch over that, your heart. The next one, watching over your mind as well. That vigilance with our mind. What are we thinking about? What's going in our ear gate and our eye gate?

What's going in our mind? What are we dwelling upon? And of course the Bible tells us, as you can read more in full, the whole scripture there. But think on what is true, what is honourable, what's just, what's pure, what's lovely, what's commendable.

Think about those things. Having that vigilance over our mind. We want to look after that. Because there's a battle on for our mind. And the enemy wants to fill your mind with doubt and depression. And barrage you with all of these things that will distract.

But be sure to guard your mind. Keep your mind dwelling on that which is right. Guarding your eyes like Job said. Making a covenant with his eyes as to what he would look at.

And then we see the guarding of the tongue as well. Which flows into the next one. Think about our tongue. It can be like a small spark but sparks a big bushfire.

[26:41] We should control our speech. And so we'll go on to that in the next one. And just the other one there is guarding our associations too.

It talks about bad company can corrupt good character.

Evil associations. So the next discipline there you see tongue control. In a sense of watch what you say and how you say it. You know sometimes we need to be like the psalmist who said, Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth.

Keep the door of my lips. He prayed that God would help him to have a door over his lips. So that some words would not be said. You could say, Speak the truth.

Build others up. Let the words that you use build others, not tear them down. So for example in the notes there it talks about How can we watch our tongue, our mouth, our words.

Refuse gossip, slander, complaining, coarse joking. Now sometimes we engage mouth before brain. I'm guilty of that. Sometimes where you say something and say, Oh, that was probably not the best thing to say.

[27:44] Even though you might have just been joking around. But someone could take it hurtfully. And that's obviously being unwise. Of course joking, jesting. And then we see that we should season our speech with grace.

Always have grace in what you say. Is that a gracious thing? Is that reflective of God's grace what I'm saying? Or is it not? If not, better not say it.

And so is it true? Is it helpful? Is it necessary? Is it kind? You want to think before you say such things. Next one. Discipline of service. That's another discipline we could have of thinking, How can I serve God?

How can I contribute? How can I participate? It says of the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus, He says He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

In other words, to serve. That His whole life was service. It was ministry. And likewise, we are to serve one another by love. Galatians there, by love serve one another.

[28:49] And you think about service, it's the reflection of Christ's likeness, isn't it? In Philippians, it tells how we should let this mind be in you. The mind of Christ.

He took upon Him the form of a servant. We see the ministry of the Lord, how He was just a servant, servant-hearted. So how can we put that into practice?

For example, the spirit of true service, and do things secretly, from love, not out of wanting to be recognised. It talks there about let your giving, let your praying, let your fasting be in secret, so your Father sees it.

And then we see the truth of preferring others' needs above yourself, different small acts you can serve, caring for the vulnerable.

And there's the truth that, well, if we do it to the least of these, we do it unto Him. In Matthew 25, see there about visiting the fatherless and the widows. It's kind of practical things we can do to put your faith into action in practical ways.

[29:56] And sharing the gospel, of course, along the way. And you could ask yourself daily, how can I serve you, Lord, today? And it's not like, sometimes there's this division of clergy and laity.

Hey, we're all in full-time ministry, every one of us, whether in your workplace, your home place, the school place, the social place. You are a full-time minister, a full-time to hear about or think about. But the truth is, as a Christian, we can have times of suffering, even times of persecution. And Paul tells Timothy, 2 Timothy 3, 12, yeah, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.

We can expect it. And in John 15, our Lord says, if they persecuted me, they shall also persecute you. So we can expect to have some persecution that comes our way.

And of course, 1 Peter 1 talks about how the trial of your faith, that testing of your faith, it's going to be like gold that perisheth, that refining time of your faith, going through the fire.

[31:01] Life sometimes throws things at us. We think, oh, I'd rather not have had that. But actually, God's making gold, that God's doing something out of that time. As much as it's hard when you're in the fire, that you actually, God is doing something in the fire, through the fire.

He's conforming us to Christ's image. And He's building endurance and hope. We see that there in Romans. It talks about how we glory in tribulations.

There's a sense where we're actually got a gratefulness for the tribulation because it's going to work patience. There's endurance going to come. There's experience. There's hope. God's building something out of this.

It's actually building you. It's building endurance and hope. And we see the truth there in 2 Corinthians 1, how God is the God of all comfort.

He comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble. By the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. So that occasion where you're going through some strife or problem is going to help you to be able to come into different trials, temptations, tests, knowing that the trying of your faith is going to work that patience.

[32:15] You're going to have a greater endurance from it. It says rejoice and be exceeding glad. When they persecute you, is the context there. There's a sense where we can have joy even when we're getting persecuted for being a Christian.

And then 1 Peter 4, likewise rejoice in so much as you're partakers of Christ's suffering. And then in Acts 5, where they've been beaten up for the Lord, they were rejoicing, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

It's like it was a badge of honour to be persecuted for their faith. There's a sense where there's a joy that comes that you're doing what's right and you're doing what's godly and you're entrusting yourself to the Lord in the process.

So don't be surprised by trials. Don't be shocked by them. It's not that you're out of God's will. It could be that you're right in the centre of God's will when the testings come and just refuse bitterness.

Use suffering to draw you closer to the Lord and to minister as well. And it tells us the truth there that even our light affliction is going to bring an eternal weight of glory.

[33:24] See that there? 2 Corinthians 4, 17. There's a glory that's going to come out of our light affliction. It's producing something. So the discipline of suffering and persecution, it's not one that we like to have, but it's going to help us.

It's going to be good for us. And then the next one, the discipline of submission, the truth that we shouldn't be prideful, we should be humble, we should be submitting ourselves.

There's a mutual submission here in Ephesians 5, 21. Submitting yourselves one to another.

There's a sense where we should not be one above another or looking down on this or that, but being brothers and sisters together, submitting ourselves together.

And, of course, unto God to surrender our life to him. We see there Romans 13, where there's that submission as well to government.

We don't always like that. You know, there's road rules. You're supposed to obey the speed limit, for example. There's necessary laws over us that are meant for our good, so be subject unto the high powers.

[34:25] And that sense of in the workplace there is like a servant-master situation, Ephesians 6, where it's good for us to have submission within the workplace to follow orders and direction.

And then in the church setting too, to submit as well, in that godly sense of godly submission. So there's that truth that we should be clothed with humility, that we should have that teachable heart and have that godly submission and not have a pridefulness, which can be an issue.

Next one, we see the discipline of gratitude and thanksgiving. It tells us there, 1 Thessalonians 5, in everything give thanks. And that can be hard too, can't it? A discipline of giving thanks in everything.

Sometimes you wonder, how can that really be, that in everything I'm going to give thanks? Well, we're told to. It's God's will that we do that. In Ephesians 5, it says, giving thanks always for all things.

Philippians 4, when we're praying, pray with thanksgiving. When we're worshipping, enter his gates with thanksgiving. And you see there, Paul and Silas, they've just been beaten and thrashed and imprisoned, held in stocks, you know, in this awful place.

[35:44] And what did they do? They prayed and they sang praises. It's counterintuitive, isn't it? Why should I praise God? Things aren't how I want them to be. Well, Paul and Silas did.

They prayed and they sang praises. And it was a witness to the prisoners that heard them. And you think, how can I be more thankful? How can I exercise more thankfulness in all circumstances? Even when, humanly, I don't want to be thankful, I can give thanks in all circumstances, trusting God's in control. God's got in hand what's happening for me.

You're not necessarily thanking Him for the evil, but in the situation, you can thank Him that He's there with you in that test that you're going through. And rather than have complaining or some entitlement, well, I deserve better than this, no, give thanks anyway, just be thankful.

And you think of other Bible examples, for example, you see there, the psalmist cried out, bless the Lord, O my soul, all that is within me, bless the Lord, O my soul.

[36:48] Forget not all these benefits. Even when the situation isn't perfect, it's not how you'd want it to be, you can still find something to thank Him for. You can still find something to thank God for, even though you've got things that you're not happy about, you can still be thankful.

And that was David's recounting his benefits. Think of all these benefits. Think of Daniel there. It's interesting, when Daniel heard the news that the law was written, that basically worship was banned, what did he do?

He knelt upon his knees, he opened his windows, he prayed and gave thanks, as he always had done. It didn't stop him. And he actually gave thanks, even though the law was actually against him praying, he was courageous enough to keep praying and to give God thanks, even in that adverse situation, knowing that the lion's den would be his law.

He gave thanks anyway. And you think of the danger of being not thankful. It's a characteristic of those who don't know God. You see that there, Romans 1, 21? When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful.

You see, of the world today, they don't care about God, they don't stop to give thanks. There's an unthankfulness. Isn't there? Where they don't recognize God or stop to be thankful, but just are inclined to complain.

[38:18] So learn, it's a godly discipline, learn to be thankful. It's a good discipline. So coming to a close, really, think of all of these things that we've talked about tonight. It's that spiritual workout, all of these things that we've covered, and there's lots more we could talk about too.

But there's that truth where we're disciples. There's that truth of discipline, of disciplining ourselves, of self-discipline. Sometimes the hardest thing, isn't it? I know for myself, self-discipline is the hardest discipline.

I've actually got to sharpen up and shape up and smarten up and get myself sorted when I can see I need to lift my game. And that sense of discipline where you see the athlete there in Hebrews 12, where they're laying aside every way, the sin which is going to cumber them.

We should fight every sin. We should run with patience, with endurance, that race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, keeping our eyes on Him. So perseverance is a discipline.

We see how in Philippians it says, Paul says, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, I'm reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, the prize, the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

[39:41] You see the truth that, again, that athletic kind of picture there that Paul's picturing the Christian life as this race again, that he's running towards that finishing line, he's reaching for that final entering into his presence, finishing the race of life.

And you see that sense where, hey, we want to press forward. We want to press toward the mark. We want to have that discipline that an athlete would have. Keep on going on. And again, to exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

How can we be that way? Think of these disciplines here tonight. Hopefully it's given you some food for thought. Some of them are very simple. Of course, reading the Bible should be obvious, praying. How can I have that worship, even fasting maybe, if I'm led so. Stewardship, how can I use my time, talent, treasures.

The discipline of soul winning. Do I care about souls enough to tell? It's an important discipline. Sometimes it's difficult to open our mouth and share the gospel. The discipline of separation.

[40:49] Hey, we want to be careful about who we're hanging with and what we're spending our time with. The discipline of watchfulness, of vigilance, looking after our heart, keeping our heart, guarding our tongue as well, what we say.

The discipline of service. How can I serve God? What gifts and callings have I got? What's God putting on my heart to do? The discipline of suffering and persecution. Actually, God's using it. He's going to help you through it and you're going to benefit. And the discipline of submission. Let's be teachable. Let's be humble. Let's have mutual accountability.

And the discipline of gratitude and thanksgiving. Hey, stop to thank him. Stop to thank him for what he's done. Have a thankfulness in your heart that even you can praise and praise in prison. That you can have that heart to give him your worship and praise. And run that race with that discipline. That you're a spiritual athlete. God's building up your spiritual muscles in all of these dimensions through all of these means.

[41:52] All of these different elements that God can help you to grow. It's all about growing. As a Christian, sometimes our growth can be stunted. We don't grow. We're just kind of stagnant or static.

But God wants us to be growing, to be building up the spiritual muscles. So it's all about that. As you're a disciple, there's disciplines. There's disciplines. Let's close in prayer just for now. Lord, we thank you that you've given us your word.

And Lord, you've given us your Holy Spirit. Lord, we thank you for your help in all of these things that we can learn some of these truths of being thankful, of having our hearts guarded, of being led by your Spirit into ways we can serve and live and go through tests and struggles.

Lord, being prayerful, being a spiritual people. Lord, you're building up our spiritual muscles through all of these different elements that sometimes we've got to go through. Help us, Lord, to have that heart of a disciple.

But we want to take up our cross and follow you. And Lord, we'll be like that spiritual athlete that is willing to put in the time in the gymnasium of growing our faith and getting stronger in our walk with you.

[43:04] We thank you for all these things, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.