

Spiritual Disciplines

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[0 : 00] Spiritual disciplines. If you like a picture here of an athlete and we're talking about! Spiritual disciplines tonight. Spiritual disciplines. Talking about training yourself to be godly! And we know that discipline is something that is needful for athletes, for musicians, for professionals of all kinds, for those studying, for those seeking to learn a trade or some type of training. They've got to discipline themselves and it takes training, it takes discipline to do well. And we see the next scripture here is 1 Timothy 4 verse 7. 1 Timothy 4 verse 7. We see where it says, but refuse profane and old wives' fables and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. So it's telling us there, train yourself to be godly. How are we to grow? By training, by discipline. And it's needful to go well in any aspect of life. We need to exercise discipline. And when you think about it, our Lord's disciples were disciplined.

They were disciples, they were disciplined. There was a discipline there in being a disciple. And so we see that discipline helps us to increase in our physical and mental fitness. It takes training and practice. We know for those that are in the military, you know, I just had just a momentary time in that line where I was a recruit and became a trooper in the Armoured Corps. And in the recruit course, we had to jump out of bed to go for a jog, five o'clock in the morning I think it was, for two weeks.

And that wasn't something I normally did. It took discipline and it gave me discipline. And there are lots of other things naturally. I'm sure those that can relate that have been in the military of some kind or in some military type outfit, that there's a particular discipline that's required of soldiers, of police, of professionals of all kinds.

Where there's a uniform they have to wear, they have to look snappy and polished and prepared for that task that they have. And the commanding officer makes sure that they look the part. They look like they're a soldier.

They look like they're ready for battle. And they've got their shoes shiny and their brass shiny and their shirt pressed and their legs, the pant legs all straight and tidy because they're representing their outfit.

[2 : 44] And there's a discipline there for such an occupation. For the Christian too, we should be smart and polished and sharp. We should be disciplined people.

We should be ready for action. We should be trained and prepared for battle. And discipline is required in the church. A discipline, a spiritual discipline. And when we think of disciplines, we think of making a resolution, a commitment.

It's a discipline, it's a deliberate intent. It's a determination, a devotion. And we're talking today about spiritual disciplines. There's various authors that have used this kind of term.

Some might go a bit extreme here and there. But there is that truth that there is a need for an intentional choice about how we spend our lives, our time, our devotion.

It's true mentally, physically and spiritually. How do we get more spiritually fit is the question. How do we get more spiritually healthy for this Christian life that we're meant to be living?

[3 : 49] It takes spiritual discipline. It's about living an intentional and disciplined Christian life. To be a disciple takes discipline.

And what I want to relate tonight are some healthy habits for the Christian. Some healthy habits.

Things we can practice every day to be sharper and more focused in our Christian life.

Practice them every day. These are behaviours that add to our spiritual growth, that help us to grow. Good godly habits that will help us to mature in Christ and for our faith to be effective, vibrant, growing.

It's about the sacrifices we make as well. It talks about the activities that we devote ourselves to. Spiritual disciplines. These disciplines can strengthen our faith and our reliance on our Lord because he wants us to be sharp.

He wants us to grow in grace. He wants us to be effective and fruitful and abounding in the work. And these are ways that we all determine to learn to grow, to draw closer to our Lord and to become more like him.

[5 : 05] We see the first one here, Bible intake. Bible intake. In Psalm 119 verse 11 it says, Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.

Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee. Psalm 119 verse 11. It's telling us read the word. Make it a daily habit.

Make it a part of your daily routine. If you like. There's some that say no Bible, no breakfast. They count it as more necessary than their daily food such that they need a feed, a feed for their soul. And the word is such that we need that daily habit. One of the greatest needs we see in the church worldwide is Bible literacy.

There's a lack of Bible literacy. There's a biblically illiterate church where people don't know the very basics of sound doctrine, of teaching, of Bible truth.

[6 : 10] And it's a great need. And it's worldwide this great need that we have of Bible, biblical literacy. And how do we get there? It's as we develop a love for the word of God.

The reading of it. The study of it. The memorization of it. Study it. Apply it. In 2 Timothy 2.15 we read. Study to show thyself approved unto God.

A workman that needeth not be ashamed. Rightly dividing the word of truth. It tells us there. Study. Study to show thyself approved unto God.

In other words, get equipped with the Bible. And it's how we learn God's ways is through the Bible. It's how we hear God's voice. It's through the Bible.

It's how we know God's will. Through the Bible. It's how we are enabled to exercise discernment.

How do we know what's right and wrong? What's true and false? It's as we get Bible centered.

[7 : 12] We can develop those skills. We can develop those skills to learn that discernment, to be separate from the world as we are in tune with God's word.

He will show us the way to take, the direction, the path to take. And he'll say, go straight through. Not to the right, not to the left. Go straight through. Straight ahead. We need to be straight as a die. Biblical. Biblical. A biblical church. So, to be growing in spiritual disciplines, we need Bible intake. Secondly, we need prayer.

Prayer. It speaks of our communion with God. In Luke 5.16. Our Lord himself, of him it says, and he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed.

The Lord Jesus withdrew himself into the wilderness and he prayed. Our very Lord in Luke 5.16.

What an example. A role model he set for us.

[8 : 11] And prayer is our communion with God. And to think that God the Son spent time in prayer. It should speak volumes to us. How he sought to pray.

Ought to pray. Always pray. And be devoted to prayer in Colossians 4.2. Colossians 4.2. It says, continue in prayer. And watch in the same with thanksgiving.

Continue in it. We know there's a sense of persevering in prayer. Of always praying. In Luke 11.1.

We read that it says, he came to pass that he was praying in a certain place.

When he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray. As John also taught his disciples. So let us be like the disciples.

Lord, teach us to pray. And of course, it goes on to read how he tells the disciples. Our Father, which art in heaven.

[9 : 15] It goes on through that model prayer. Of the elements of prayer. And our Lord taught his disciples to pray. It was a spiritual discipline. It's another important part of our spiritual fruitfulness.

That we learn to pray. It's how we can grow in our Christian faith and fruitfulness. Bible intake.

Prayer. Worship.

Worship is another spiritual discipline. These are elementary truths, yet vital. Worship. As we seek his face. We nurture that relationship with God.

We get hungry for God. We hunger and thirst after righteousness. In Psalm 63 verse 1. It tells us of this psalm.

A psalm of David. When he was in the wilderness of Judah. And verse 1 says of Psalm 63. O God, thou art my God.

[10 : 15] Early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth for thee. My flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.

We need to thirst for God.

Have that soul thirst. To want to worship. To want to get together. To want to fellowship. And worship is that spiritual discipline. As we are building a Christian community.

We're building a community of God's people. Of that family. As we fellowship. As we worship together. As we see that spiritual growth happen. As we impart to one another.

As when we get together. It's exhorting one another. It's encouraging one another. It's building up one another. So much the more as we see the day approaching. We grow closer together.

[11 : 21] And it talks about being knitted together in love. That's God's plan for his church. As we grow together in fellowship with our Lord. And with one another. So we see the Bible.

Bible intake. We see prayer. We see worship. Here's another one. Serving. Serving.

The discipline of serving helps us to work hard against that inclination we all have to be self-centered. It's about thinking of others.

It's about others. Instead of being self-centered and selfish. And this spiritual discipline of serving. It takes an intent. It takes a devotion.

It takes an application. You know the people that run the Sunday school. Don't just turn up at five to ten. And just kind of think it's all going to just happen by magic.

[12 : 23] You know by osmosis. Or by just good luck. But it's been planned. It's been purposefully prepared. It's been prayerfully prepared.

That they've put time and energy into that ministry that they have. Likewise the youth ministry.

Likewise the women's ministry. Likewise this ministry. It takes time to get things prepared.

And serving. It takes that intent. It takes that application of time and effort and energy and purpose.

And likewise all of us have different ways we can serve our Lord together.

And let's look for those opportunities. Let's look for those gifts and callings that we all have. And use them wisely for God's glory. And really we need to join the secret service too.

In the sense that what we do for our Lord. It's not about us bragging about what we do. Or showing off. Or trying to big note ourselves. Or blow the trumpet about how good we are.

[13 : 27] In Matthew 6 verse 1. Our Lord says, Take heed that you do not your arms before men. So your good works. Take heed that you do not them before men. To be seen of them.

Otherwise you have no reward of your Father. which is in heaven. Now sometimes those secret things that you do for the Lord. Those secret ministries. Those kind of hidden blessings that you impart to others.

The time you take to care. To reach out to people. Where you might not be seen. Or it may not be praised. Or acknowledged by other people.

So we say, Do not your arms before men. To be seen of them. Otherwise you have no reward of your Father. Which is in heaven. Now think of Christ's humble service.

Of John 13. Of how he bent his knee and took the towel. And cared in practical nitty gritty ways. To be of service.

[14 : 30] And we really as God's people. We incarnate Christ. It's Christ in us. You know, Khan speaks of the flesh. Incarnate.

Now, Christ, our Lord Jesus, is God incarnate. In the flesh. And, there is that sense too, where, we as God's people, Christ in you.

The hope of glory. Christ is in you. In each one. That knows him here today. In each one of you. Each one of us. Christ is in you.

And we are Christ incarnate. In that sense that, Christ is in us. Reaching out to this world. To this town. To this city.

To this state. This nation. This world. Through you and me. We are Christ incarnate. And so we should be serving. As Christ served. Because, as someone has said, he's got no other hands but, your hands.

[15 : 29] As it were. No feet, but your feet. That we are, his hand extended to our world. Serving. It's a spiritual discipline.

And it's the yoke of our Lord Jesus, in Matthew 11, through 29, through 30. That familiar one, where our Lord says to us, take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.

For I am meek and lowly in heart. And ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. His yoke.

He calls you to that. To take that upon you. And he'll carry the heavy end. Think of how you can serve God. Be a channel. For the river of God.

Be a channel. For God to flow through you. To reach out and touch others. God wants us to grow. Sometimes to grow, well, always to grow, there's some stretching, isn't there?

[16:32] There's stretching to do. And, I know as a, as a young man, I used to try to stretch. Every so often, I'm going to be taller than my dad.

And my mum. And I am. But, you know, there's that sense where you've got to stretch, don't you? To grow. To get taller. To get bigger. To get stronger. To get more physically able.

There's a stretching. And likewise too, physically, likewise spiritually. Sometimes we've got to stretch ourselves. I just love to encourage Christians to step in, step out, step up, and do something for God.

You might say, oh, I've never done that before. Well, today's the day, isn't it? Now's the time to do something. You know, don't be afraid to serve God in new ways.

And so too, we can grow, spiritually mature. And our Lord wants us to serve Him with joy. There's a joyfulness. It's a glad joy, a glad blessing that we have.

[17:34] My yoke is easy. My yoke is easy, he says. And my burden is light. You know, if we're serving God and it becomes a drudgery or a weight or a heaviness, then maybe we're taking on something that's not His yoke for us, His burden.

And so it takes discipline and not to be weary in well-doing, but rather to be encouraged that it's a joyful privilege to serve Him. Another spiritual discipline is evangelism.

Evangelism. And it means that transmission of the gospel. In 1 Peter 3 verse 15, we read, But sanctify the Lord God in your heart and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

Sanctify the Lord. Set Him apart. Glorify Him in your hearts and be ready always, always, to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

So when we witness, we're meant to witness with meekness, so be gentle, and with fear. There's that godly reverence. This is a holy task commissioned.

[18:59] He's commissioned you and me to this holy task. And it's a fearful thing. We want to get it right. We don't want to turn people away from our Lord.

We need to be wise and gentle and minister God's truth with that heart of compassion. And evangelism is a discipline that we're called to in that we have a responsibility to do it.

In 2 Corinthians 5, verse 20, we read, Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you in Christ's stead. Be ye reconciled unto God.

We're standing in Christ's stead. In other words, we're standing in Christ's shoes. We're standing in the position of Christ, representing Christ.

We represent our Lord Jesus Christ. And so, in representing Him, we urge people, be ye reconciled unto God.

[20:00] We're ambassadors. We're, as it were, sent into a foreign culture, a foreign country. We're foreigners here, all of us.

Whether you're an Aussie or not, we're still foreigners, amen? If you're a believer, you're a foreigner in this nation. We don't belong to this culture. We are sent as ambassadors of heaven, ambassadors for Christ, representing Him.

And so, we've got a responsibility to deliver that message crystal clear and without us getting in the way. Be intentional to do it. Evangelism, it's a spiritual discipline.

Another one is fasting. Fasting is a spiritual discipline and again, Matthew 6 verse 1, our Lord tells, take heed that you do not your arms before men, your good works before men, to be seen of them, otherwise you have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

And in the context, it talks about fasting. It talks about something, make a big show about and want to show everybody, oh, I'm fasting, as if it somehow big notes them and makes them seem more spiritual than those who are not.

[21:12] So, it's about a motive behind it. It's about that our motive above all things is to the glory of God. It's not for any praise of me or you, any of us.

Not for our glory. It's all for His glory and honour. And there's a secret aspect to it. That we do it without blowing our own trumpet. You know, some people like to act as if they're more spiritual than the rest of us.

As if they've got some extra credit to gain, to prove, to show. But with fasting, it's all about the priorities and the purpose of it.

As Isaiah 58 tells us, in the context it talks about the fast that God has chosen. Isaiah 58, verse 6, it says, Is not this the fast that I've chosen?

To loose the bands of the wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens and to let the oppressed go free and that you break every yoke. There's a sense where that's, it kind of puts it in more the spiritual dimension of the fasting.

[22 : 16] That it's about the spiritual intent behind it, the motive. So as we fast, as we pray, as we seek God, as we let go of things and we lay hold of things.

That's the sense of fasting where, and you could apply it to things, I know some talk about going on media fast or where they just stop what they normally do and spend more time with God.

They put those things aside, whether it's meals or whether it's other activities or, you know, the media or whatever, whatever gets in the way of time with God and having more time with Him, having more time for spiritual application and for practical things too as Isaiah 58 talks about.

It's about having that heart to serve, to do for God and so that's another spiritual discipline. And lastly is stewardship or giving. It takes a discipline.

I know there's people with an intent here that they, as the scriptures tell us, they lay aside a regular portion, a regular part of their livelihood so that they've spent time to earn that money and we all have limited income but they've set that income aside unto God.

[23 : 44] They've dedicated that unto God as an expression of their lives of their livelihood, of their living, that they've earned that money by time that they've invested.

It's an investment of our lives and stewardship is a commitment, it's a discipline, it's an intent, it's an intention of stewardship. And our Lord tells us in 2 Corinthians 9 verse 7 how we ought to give.

Every man according to his purpose and in his heart so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity for God loveth a cheerful giver.

When we give it's an expression of our love for the Lord, it's an expression of our worship. So it's not out of a compulsion but out of a cheerfulness, it's out of a joyfulness, it's an expression of our love, it's a spiritual discipline, it takes discipline to commit in our giving as scripturally we ought to.

And the end result of all these various spiritual disciplines is that they produce spiritual fruit. And it's all to the glory of God. Think of those things, we might just quickly recap over all the slides, just real quick, can we, Jackie, if we can.

[25 : 03] Go right back to the beginning because I know we've missed some and we'll just go right back to the very start. Talking about spiritual disciplines, exercise thyself unto godliness, 1 Timothy 4 verse 7.

Exercise thyself, it's an intent, train yourself to be godly. We see then it takes Bible intake, that's one spiritual discipline, the Bible.

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, Psalm 119. Study, 2 Timothy 2.15, the word of God, study it. Prayer is another spiritual discipline.

He withdrew himself into the wilderness, our Lord, and he prayed. It says, continue in prayer, Colossians 4. Luke 11, it says, it came to pass, they asked him, Lord, teach us to pray.

Worship. David was in the wilderness, he said, early will I seek thee, my flesh longeth for thee, my soul thirsteth for thee. Worship, seek his face, serving.

[26 : 10] Serve God, be a servant. Take heed that you do not your arms before men to be seen of them. Secret service in the sense of not bragging of it.

Take my yoke upon you, he says. My yoke is easy, my burden is light. Evangelism, witness, be a transmitter of the gospel message. And don't get in the way.

Do it with meekness and fear. Sanctify the Lord God in your heart, 1 Peter 3. And be an ambassador, 2 Corinthians 5, for Christ. And then we see fasting.

Again, of secret service. Not to brag or display or show off, but because it's about dedicating yourself, fasting.

Matthew 6, where our Lord says, don't do it to be seen of men. And that applies across everything, really. And lastly, the giving again.

[27 : 12] Stewardship. That every man give as he purpose and in heart. Not grudgingly or of necessity. God loveth it to you. These are all various spiritual disciplines.

Elementary things, really. This is not really any deep theology, but it is truth, isn't it? It's simple, but true. It's vital for us to grow.

And I know we all ought to have that longing, that desire to be his disciples. I know someone was telling me lately they wanted training in discipleship. These are the disciplines, spiritual disciplines. We all can seek God to absorb more, to display more, to activate more in each of our lives all for the glory of God, to produce spiritual fruit, to have, as it were, to wind up the last slide, to be, as it were, like that athlete on the racetrack, that discipline, that intent that he calls us to.

Let us pray. Our Lord and God, we thank you that you call us to that walk with you. And Lord, we know that it takes discipline.

[28 : 25] As a soldier has to learn discipline so that they can be effective. As an athlete has to discipline himself or herself to run that race, to take that event and to win.

Likewise, we as your disciples need discipline, Lord. Help us to be such a people that we will learn more of these truths of spiritual disciplines in our lives that we can apply so we can be more effective for you, so we can grow and be fruitful.

Lord, help us to know these truths, to make it live in our lives that it will be all to your glory when we'll see your face and you will say, well done.

And all the glory will be yours. In Jesus' name. Amen.