

Spiritual Disciplines #1:

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

In an era where instant gratification is the way in which people approach life, the very idea of discipline seems repelling to many. Yet God invites us on a journey that involves discipline; disciplines that, by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, grows us into a relationship of dependence, intimacy and awe of our Creator and Redeemer.

1. Spiritual disciplines are habits and practices designed to strengthen our relationship with God.

I Timothy 4:7

Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.

2. The spiritual disciplines are a means of **grace**.

Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Spiritual disciplines are not the goal in and of themselves. They are the means through which we achieve a purpose.

1. To know and love God.
2. To transform us into Christ's likeness. (I Timothy 4:8)

I Timothy 4:8

Bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

3. To cultivate spiritual maturity.

Maturity involves discovering and submitting your will to God's.

4. To maintain spiritual health.

2 Corinthians 4:16

Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

5. To be continually empowered by the Holy Spirit.

HOW DO WE DEVELOP THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

1. Partner with the Holy Spirit.
2. Commit to learn and cultivate the Spiritual disciplines.

- The spiritual disciplines can be learned.

Luke 11:1

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.'

- Set a specific time and place. That helps to undertake our minds and bodies as we eliminate the main physical obstacles for the practice of spiritual disciplines. These obstacles include:
 - Procrastination.
 - Distraction. (II Corinthians 11:3)
- 3. Evaluate yourself periodically.

1 Corinthians 9:25-27

Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore, I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

4. Seek community and accountability.

THE PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

1. Jesus is our motivation for practicing spiritual disciplines.

Psalms 42:2

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

2. The Holy Spirit initiates, energizes, and maintains the spiritual disciplines in our lives. However, He does it in partnership with our continuous choice to discipline ourselves.
3. We do not earn God's grace through the disciplines, but we do put ourselves in a place where God can change us by His Holy Spirit.
4. We must be vigilant not to convert disciplines into law but to allow them to be what they were intended to be: life and freedom. (II Corinthians 3:6; Matthew 11:29)

Matthew 23:1-4

"Then Jesus said to the crowds and to His disciples: 'The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.'"

BY THE LAW (SELF-RELIANCE)	BY GRACE
Seeking acceptance from God on the basis of trying hard to obey God	Seeking acceptance from God on the basis of trusting only in Jesus Christ
Seeking spiritual growth through keeping God's laws & human rules	Seeking spiritual growth through cultivating a relationship with God
Emphasis on will power	Emphasis on believing God
Dependence on self	Dependence on the

	Holy Spirit
Engages in spiritual disciplines as works to be accomplished	Engages in spiritual disciplines as a means of receiving grace
Fruit: either self-righteous pride or self-defeating discouragement	Fruit: peace with God, humility, love for others, joy of salvation
Result: provocation of the sin nature leading to greater sin	Result: subduing of the sin nature & real transformation

5. Once we are free from self-imposed law and the condemnation that comes with it, the grace of the disciplined life then has an appeal to others.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was your perspective on spiritual disciplines prior to this class? Has your perspective changed as a result of this class? If so, how?
2. Does God's grace absolve us of active engagement in our spiritual formation?

HOMEWORK

1. What's the main obstacle for you to be more consistent in your practice of the spiritual disciplines? Memorize a Bible verse that will help you overcome that obstacle.
2. Read Romans 8. Write down the ways in which the Holy Spirit helps us.