



FORMED BY JESUS



INTRODUCTION

“The goal of practicing a given Discipline, of course, is not about doing as much as it is about being, that is, being like Jesus.”

- Donald S. Whitney

PREP

Check out the introduction video from Pastor Chase:
www.templebiblechurch.org/disciplines

Overview

Before studying the spiritual disciplines themselves, we must be ready to put them into practice. The spiritual disciplines are not qualities we have, but practices to lead us to characteristics of Jesus. They are made to allow us to experience the peace, joy, and love of God. They put us in the path of the Lord in order to feel his wake as he moves and works. But, we must be willing to reorient our lives to put them into practice.

Passages

1 Timothy 4:6-11 | 2 Peter 3:14-18 | Titus 2:11-14

Terms

Spiritual Disciplines

Those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times. (Whitney)

Opening Question

o What is something you have worked hard at to ensure change or results in your life?

READING

by TJ Greeson

“Aren’t you scared?”

This is the question my grandma asked my dad as she pulled him aside to talk. My mom and dad had committed to going overseas to be missionaries. They were bringing along my older brother and sister with them to an unknown land of unknown people.

“Aren’t you scared of what might happen to your family?” she asked again.

My dad simply replied, “I am scared. But I am more scared of not obeying God.”

When it comes to following God, my dad is the most disciplined person I know. He modeled for me and my siblings what a life of devotion to the Lord looks like.

In this study we are going to walk through the spiritual disciplines. They are all practices Jesus expects his followers to do in order for two things to happen: First, know and love the Father more deeply by growing in intimacy and faithfulness with him and second, show the world who Jesus is by demonstrating holiness and love to those around us. The spiritual disciplines are not what transform us. Jesus is the sole heart changer. What the spiritual disciplines help us do is walk in a way that opens ourselves up to the heart changes the Lord has for us.

Growing up as a missionary kid, I constantly felt the strain to perform my faith. I needed to do all these spiritual things in order to be a better Christian. My mindset was that God would love me more if I do these things. It was not until my senior year of high school that God got hold of my heart. After multiple losses in sports, I was praying to God and complained about never being able to be first. I asked God, “Why can’t I ever be first?” It was a shallow prayer from an emotional and sore loser. And as I sat quietly, the Lord spoke to me and I was brought to tears.

I felt God saying, “I am asking you the same question. Why can’t I be first in your life?” All the ways I thought I was serving God, I was really just serving myself. The Bible studies, the prayer gatherings, the service opportunities that I was facilitating were all ways in which I was performing my faith to prove that I was a good Christian. Not once was any of it for the Lord. Not once was my faith an aspect of devotion to the Lord. My faith was in morality.

As we work through the spiritual disciplines it needs to be clear that these are practices that we do for the Lord and by his help. The Lord will transform our hearts to love him more deeply as we humble ourselves to be changed. That growing love will then move us to pursue him more diligently. Intention is important. If these practices are just a list of things to check off, then the lack of change in our lives will bring about frustration.

It will be work. Hard work. Hard intentional work. The book of James urges us to be doers of the Word (James 1:22). If we say we are devoted to the Lord, then we must do what he says. If we say that we follow Jesus, there is no other option than to do what he says. If we do not, then that proves we are not devoted. Practicing what Jesus preached is going to be hard. Practicing the way of Jesus is going to lead you to places you may have never been before. These places can be dangerous. Harm may come to your pride. Harm may come to your comfort. Harm may come to your time. Harm may come to your reputation. Harm may come to your desires and passions. Are you scared? Or are you more scared of not being devoted to God?

Let us be devoted to him together. Let us strive to be spiritually disciplined followers so that the Lord may change us and work through us.

DISCUSSION

1 Timothy 4:6-11

“Train yourselves for godliness” (ESV). “Train yourself to be godly” (NIV). “Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” (NASB). No matter the way it is translated, the Apostle Paul urges Timothy to be disciplined in striving for holiness.

- o *What does “training yourselves for godliness” look like? What are ways we can train?*
- o *Paul says that godliness “holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” What does this mean?*
- o *In what ways have you seen godliness benefit your present life? How has it cost you?*

2 Peter 3:14-18

As the Apostle Peter wraps up his letter, his final words plead for his readers to be prepared for Jesus’ coming. Perhaps Peter is thinking back to Jesus’ ascension (Acts 1:9-11). After Jesus was taken up into heaven, two angels stood before the disciples asking why they were looking up. They were not to wait for Jesus by staring into the clouds, but by preparing themselves and others for his return.

- o *What does it look like to “be diligent to be found without spot or blemish”? Why does Peter follow this with “and at peace”?*
- o *Think of the opposite. What would your life look like if you were not diligent?*
- o *What things cause you or others to be “carried away” and make you “lose your own stability”?*
- o *What does it look like to “grow in the grace and knowledge” of Jesus?*

Titus 2:11-14

- o *What does it mean to renounce ungodliness? How have you seen God’s grace help you to renounce ungodliness?*
- o *How does the grace of God help us to be self-controlled? What does being self-controlled look like?*
- o *When have you really felt the zeal for good works? How did you come to this?*

DISCUSSION

The Spiritual Disciplines

As we look forward to studying what it looks like to practice the spiritual disciplines, let us review each one to prepare. As a church, we want to see the people of God be transformed into the same image of Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18) so that we can be presented to God as holy and acceptable living sacrifices (Romans 12:1).

Read, Study, Memorize the Word

Be a Part of the Church

Prayer

Fasting

Solitude

Sabbath

Giving

Service

Hospitality

Evangelism

- o *Which discipline(s) do you feel you have implemented the most in your life? What has your experience been like with it?*
- o *What has been or what do you think will be the hardest discipline to practice for you? Explain.*
- o *Who is someone that comes to mind that has demonstrated these disciplines to you? What did their life look like?*
- o *What scares you the most when it comes to practicing spiritual disciplines? Why? What brings peace to that fear?*
- o *What is something you hope to see the Lord transform in your life? What can you do to be more open to his transformation?*
- o *How does biblical community play a role in practicing the spiritual disciplines?*

CHALLENGE

This study will include challenges. These are ways to tangibly practice the spiritual discipline for that session. The goal is not to make a list of things you need to complete, but for you to experience the disciplines. You may choose to practice the discipline by doing something that is not on the list—that is fine! This is for home group members to test out, practice a discipline, and then come back to the group the following week to share your experiences. Do not just study the Word, let us practically live it out.

- o Spend time praying and asking God to prepare your heart to be open to making some changes to your habits as part of this study.**
- o Consider purchasing one or more of the books on spiritual disciplines this week listed in the resources section.**
- o If you are married, talk to your spouse this week about how you can together be open to some changes that will help you both grow closer to the Savior.**
- o Talk with a friend who is also doing this study and keep each other accountable to pursuing habits to grow closer to Christ.**

RESOURCES

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life

Donald S. Whitney

Celebration of Discipline

Richard J. Foster

Habits of Grace

Davis Mathis

The Common Rule

Justin Whitmel Earley

