

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

INTRODUCTION

A. A View of the Spiritual Life

1. Justification

- a. John 3:3, *Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*
- b. John 5:24, *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*
- c. 2 Corinthians 5:21, *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

2. Sanctification

- a. The spiritual life is a cooperative effort between God and the believer, Philippians 2:12–13, *...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*
- b. It is a life of dependence and trust, Galatians 5:25, *If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*
- c. It is a life of obedience, John 14:21, *Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.*

3. Glorification

- a. J. A. Motyer, *...for every converted person there is an identical goal: to be satisfied with Jesus and to grow into His likeness.*
- b. God completes this work in every believer, Philippians 1:6, *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*
- c. David Hubbard, *In a massive conspiracy of grace Father, Son, and Spirit have plotted together to turn our lives around.*

B. What happens once a person comes to faith?

1. There is a call to holiness

- a. 1 Peter 1:14–16, *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy.*
- b. *Discipline is the secret of godliness. You must learn to discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.* Jay Adams
- c. *If you are not growing in grace, becoming more and more holy, yielding yourselves up to the influence of the Gospel, you are deceiving yourselves.* Charles Finney

2. The method for spiritual growth is discipleship

- a. John 15:5, *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*
- b. Luke 9:23-24, *And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.*
- c. *The cross is laid on every Christian. It begins with the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ.* Dietrich Bonhoeffer

C. Warning concerning discipleship

1. From the Bible

- a. Hebrews 12:1-2, *... since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*
- b. Revelation 3:19, *Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.*
- c. Hebrews 12:5-6, *And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by Him. For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives."*
- d. 1 Corinthians 9:27, *...I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.*

2. From followers of Christ
 - a. Elisabeth Elliot, *We pray that if any, anywhere, are fearing that the cost of discipleship is too great, that they may be given to glimpse that treasure in heaven promised to all who forsake.* Elisabeth Elliot spoke on behalf of the five widows of slain missionaries to Ecuador one year after their deaths.
 - b. C. H. Spurgeon, *There are no crown wearers in heaven, who were not cross bearers on earth.*
 - c. James Bilkey, *You will never be the person you can be if pressure, tension, and discipline are taken out of your life.*
 - d. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *You must never doubt that I'm traveling with gratitude and cheerfulness along the road where I'm being led. My past life is brim full of God's goodness, and my sins are covered by the forgiving love of Christ crucified.* Comment made by Bonhoeffer on learning that he was to be executed by the Nazis.
 - e. C. H. Spurgeon, *If persecution should arise, you must be willing to part with all that you possess, with your liberty, with your life itself, for Christ, or you cannot be his disciple.*

WHY WE SHOULD BE DISCIPLES

- A. It is a matter of obedience
 1. Biblical declarations on obedience
 - a. James 1:22, *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*
 - b. 1 John 2:5, *...but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.*
 - c. Luke 11:28, *Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.*
 2. Quotes on obedience
 - a. Oswald Chambers, *The golden rule for understanding in spiritual matters is not intellect, but obedience...It is only by obedience that we understand the teaching of God...We learn more by five minutes' obedience than by ten years' study.*
 - b. Author unknown, *Obedience to God is always for our good and his glory.*
 - c. Martin Luther, *You may as well quit reading and hearing the Word of God, and give it to the devil, if you do not desire to live according to it.*
 - d. C. S. Lewis, *I was not born to be free. I was born to adore and to obey.*
 - e. Augustine, *You ask what you should offer: offer yourself. For what else does the Lord seek of you but you?*
 - f. A. E. Brooke, *The test of progress is obedience.*
 - g. *You must be willing to follow if you want God to lead.* Author unknown
 - h. *...pursue Godliness through practicing the disciplines out of gratitude for the grace that has saved us, not as self-justifying or self-advancing effort.* J. I. Packer
 - I. Raymond Edman, *The Lord Jesus not only expects these Disciplines of us—He modeled them for us.*
- B. It gives vision or purpose
 1. Quotes
 - a. Oswald Chambers, *A man with the vision of God is not devoted simply to a cause or a particular issue but to God Himself.*
 - b. Charles Swindoll, *Vision encompasses vast vistas outside the realm of the predictable, the safe, the expected.*
 - c. Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), *Vision is the art of seeing things invisible.*
 - d. Henry Ward Beecher, *The strength and happiness of a man consists in finding out the way in which God is going, and going that way too.*
 - e. Raymond Edman, *Discipline without direction is drudgery... Whatever the Discipline, its most important feature is its purpose. Just as there is little value in practicing the scales on a guitar or piano apart from the purpose of playing music, there is little value in practicing Spiritual Disciplines apart from the single purpose that unites them (Colossians 2:20–23, 1 Timothy 4:8). That purpose is godliness (1 Timothy 4:7).*
 2. Definition of vision
 - a. *Vision is a statement of what God wants to do through you.*
 - b. God's will for every believer is that he or she be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.
 - 1) 1 John 3:2, *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*
 - 2) Romans 8:29, *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...*
 - c. Augustine, *You ask what you should offer: offer yourself. For what else does the Lord seek of you but you?*

3. Vision deepens one's attitude of dependence upon God.
 - a. For provision of our physical and spiritual needs, Deuteronomy 8:11–14, *Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God...*
 - b. For daily plans, Colossians 3:23-24, *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*
 - c. For plans for one's future, James 4:13-17, *Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*

C. It is a correction of error

1. Jerry Bridges' Four principle ways people try to live the Christian life
 - a. Rely entirely on oneself.
 - b. Turn it all over to God (*Let go and let God*).
 - c. Don't sweat the small stuff (*I'll take care of ordinary things of life; areas where I tend to be strong*)
 - d. Personal responsibility through dependence on God's ability (*Lord, you enable me*)
2. Lack of discipleship
 - a. Donald Bloesch, *If anything characterizes modern Protestantism, it is the absence of spiritual disciplines or spiritual exercises. Yet such disciplines form the core of the life of devotion. It is not an exaggeration to state that this is the lost dimension in modern Protestantism.*
 - b. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *How often do we hear about the discipline of the Christian life these days? There was a time in the Christian church when this was at the very center, and it is, I profoundly believe, because of our neglect of this discipline that the church is in her present position. Indeed, I see no hope whatsoever of any true revival and reawakening until we return to it.*
 - c. Raymond Edman, *Ours is an undisciplined age. The old disciplines are breaking down... Above all, the discipline of divine grace is derided as legalism or is entirely unknown to a generation that is largely illiterate in the Scriptures. We need the rugged strength of Christian character that can come only from discipline.*

D. It is our God ordained journey.

1. It demands perseverance
 - a. The Holy Spirit will produce the desire and the power that leads to Godliness, 2 Timothy 1:7, *for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*
 - b. Spiritual disciplines demand interaction with and commitment to others along the path to Godliness.
 - c. There will be struggles along the path to Godliness, note *The Pilgrim's Progress*.
 - d. Raymond Edman, *The gold of Godliness isn't found on the surface of Christianity. It has to be dug from the depths with the tools of the Disciplines. But for those who persevere, the treasures are more than worth the troubles.*
2. It is progressive
 - a. Raymond Edman, *But we must remember that the full-grown freedoms of discipline-nurtured Godliness don't develop overnight or during a weekend seminar. The Bible reminds us that self-control, such as that expressed through the Spiritual Disciplines, must persevere before the mature fruit of Godliness ripens.*
 - b. 2 Peter 1:5-7, *For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.*

E. It works

1. Jesus promises spiritual vitality, John 7:37-39, *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit...*
2. Spiritual disciplines promote spiritual growth, Romans 8:6, *For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.*
3. Unknown, *Healthy fruit in our lives is the byproduct of well-nourished and cultivated roots. If we sink our inner life deep into the truth of God's Word, life will blossom in us.*

4. Three ways God changes a believer
 - a. Other people, Proverbs 27:17, *Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.*
 - b. Circumstances, Romans 8:28, *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*
 - c. Spiritual disciplines
 - 1) These work from the inside out whereas the other two work from the outside in.
 - 2) We have the opportunity to choose how much involvement we will have in the process.
 - 3) We normally have less choice regarding people and circumstances coming into our lives.
5. Donald Whitney, *The Spiritual Disciplines then are also like channels of God's transforming grace. As we place ourselves in them to seek communion with Christ, His grace flows to us and we are changed. That's why the Disciplines must become priority for us if we will be Godly.*
6. Tom Landry, former coach of the Dallas Cowboys, *The job of a football coach is to make men do what they don't want to do in order to achieve what they've always wanted to be.*
7. Dallas Willard, *If we have faith in Christ, we must believe that he knew how to live. We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives around the activities he himself practiced in order to remain constantly at home in the fellowship of his Father.*
8. Raymond Edman, *Jesus was the most disciplined Man who ever lived and yet the most joyful and passionately alive. He is our Example of discipline. Let us follow Him to joy through the spiritual disciplines.*

F. Spiritual Disciplines defined

1. They are personal and corporate disciplines that promote spiritual growth.
2. Raymond, Edman, *They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times.*
3. They are tools that develop godliness, 1 Timothy 4:7-8, *Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*
4. They are tools which allow us the freedom to participate in the process. Raymond Edman, *As we place ourselves in them to seek communion with Christ, His grace flows to us and we are changed...the freedom of Godliness is the freedom to do what God calls us to do through Scripture and the freedom to express the character qualities of Christ through our own personality.*

G. Spiritual Disciplines to be examined

1. Bible Study
2. Bible Memorization and Meditation
3. Prayer
4. Worship
5. Evangelism
6. Service
7. Ordinances

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT UNDER GRACE
G. Coleman Luck, *Christian Ethics*, Bibliotheca Sacra (Jul 1961):118:471

1. Duties toward God

a. Positive

- 1) Trust Him, Mk 11:22; Jn 14; Hb 11:6
- 2) Love and seek to know Him better, 1 Jn 5:2; Ph 3:10, 15; Jm 4:8
- 3) Be thankful, worship, praise Him, Jn 4:23; Col 3:15; Hb 13:15
- 4) Serve Him, Rm 12:6-8, 11; 1 Cor 15:58
- 5) Pray to Him, Lk 18:1; Rm 12:12; Eph 6:18; Ph 4:6; Col. 4:2; 1 Tm 2:2
- 6) Live in accordance with His will, Rm 12:1; Hb 13:21; Jm 4:7
- 7) Walk in the Spirit, Ga 5:16, 25; Eph 5:18
- 8) Hold fast to sound doctrine and contend for the faith, 2 Tm 1:13; Hb 13:9; Jude 3
- 9) Witness for Christ, Jn 15:27; Acts 1:8; 1 Pt 3:15
- 10) Do everything as unto Him, 1 Cor 10:31; Eph 6:7-8; Col 3:17, 23-24
- 11) Be diligent in devotion and study of His Word, Jn 5:39; Col 3:16; 2 Tm 2:15; Jm 4:8; 1 Pt 2:2

b. Negative

- 1) Do not have idols, 1 Cor 10:7, 14; Eph 5:3; Ph. 3:19; Col 3:5; 1 Tm 6:17; Hb 13:15; 1 Jn 5:21
- 2) Do not receive false teachers, 2 John 10
- 3) Do not mock or speak against God, Ga 6:7; Col 3:8

2. Duties toward Other Human Beings

a. Positive

- 1) Love all, especially our brethren, Jn 15:17; Rm 12:10; 1 Cor 16:14; 1 Pt 1:22; 1 Jn 3:23; 4:7
- 2) Be sympathetic and compassionate, Eph 4:32; Ph 2:4; Col 3:12
- 3) Forgive and forbear, Rm 12:19; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13
- 4) Deal honestly and fairly, Rm 12:17b; 13:7, 13; 1 Th 4:12; Jm 2:1
- 5) Do good to all and help all, Rm 12:13; Ga 6:2, 10; 1 Th 5:15; Titus 3:1; Hb 13:16; Jm 4:17; 3 Jn 11
- 6) Tell the truth, Eph 4:25
- 7) Be courteous, live peaceably with all, Rm 12:18; 1 Pt 2:17; 3:8
- 8) Treat others as we would like for them to treat us, Lk 6:31; Rm 12:17a
- 9) Provide a good example for others, 1 Cor 8:9, 13; Ph 2:15
- 10) Urge brethren to good works and seek to restore backsliders, Ga 6:1; Hb 10:24

b. Negative

- 1) Do not lie or bear false witness, Eph 4:25; Col 3:9; Titus 2:3
- 2) Do not steal, Eph 4:28; 1 Pt 4:15
- 3) Do not murder, 1 Pt 4:15
- 4) Do not commit adultery or fornication, 1 Cor 6:18; 1 Th 4:13
- 5) Do not judge others or speak evil of them, Rm 14:13; Titus 3:2; Jm 4:11; cf. Jn 7:24
- 6) Do not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever, 2 Cor 6:14
- 7) Do not have fellowship with professing Christians who live in scandalous sin, 1 Cor 5:11; 2 Th 3:14
- 8) Do not go to law with other believers, 1 Cor. 6:lff
- 9) Do not glory in men, 1 Cor. 3:21
- 10) Avoid troublemakers and useless disputes, Rm 16:17; 2 Tm 2:23; Titus 3:12
- 11) Do not have unpaid debts, Rm 13:8

3. Duties to Self

a. Positive

- 1) Be holy, 1 Pt 1:15; 2:11; 2 Pt 3:1
- 2) Cleave to the good and do good to all, Rm 12:9; 1 Th 5:15
- 3) Study the Word of God and meditate on sacred things, 1 Th 4:11; 2 Tm 2:15
- 4) Grow spiritually, 2 Pt 3:18
- 5) Think on good things, Ph 4:8
- 6) Think soberly of yourself, Rm 12:3
- 7) Be ambitious in the right way, 1 Cor 12:31; 14:1; 2 Cor 5:4
- 8) Be content with what God gives you, Hb 13:5
- 9) Rejoice in the Lord, Rm 12:12; Ph 3:1; 4:4; 1 Th 5:16
- 10) Live in the light of the judgment seat of Christ, 1 Cor 9:24
- 11) Judge yourself and confess sins to God, 1 Cor 11:31; 2 Cor 13:5; 1 Jn 1:9
- 12) Conserve time for good purposes, Eph 5:11; Col 4:5
- 13) Cultivate your mind, 1 Pt 1:13
- 14) Do useful work, Eph 4:28; 2 Th 3:12
- 15) Keep your body clean and in good health, 1 Cor 6:15, 19, 20; 10:31; Rm 12:1

b. Negative

- 1) Abhor evil, Rm 12:9; 1 Th 5:22
- 2) Avoid pride, Rm 12:3; Jm 4:10; 1 Pt 5:6
- 3) Do not conform to or love the world, Rm 12:2; 1 Jn. 2:15
- 4) Do not fellowship with evil, Eph 5:11
- 5) Do not sin through anger, Eph 4:26
- 6) Do not worry, Ph 4:6; 1 Pt 5:7; 1 Jn 14:1, 27
- 7) Do not be lazy, Rm 12:1
- 8) Do not use filthy speech, Eph 4:29; 5:4
- 9) Do not become drunk, Eph 5:18
- 10) Do not complain, 1 Cor 10:10; Ph 2:14