

FOLLOWING JESUS

“Approaching the Spiritual Disciplines”

Ambassadors SMC

February 23, 2020

REVIEW

Week 1: The Heart of a Disciple

Week 2: The Habits of a Disciple

SETTING THE SCENE – WHAT’S AT STAKE HERE?

DISCIPLINE – EVERYBODY’S GOT IT.

“Looking back, most of us can see that we wrecked our lives in very methodical ways.... Now, however, the time has come for us to turn our determination in a different direction, to develop disciplines that actually benefit us.”

Nate Larkin, *Samson and the Pirate Monks*, p. 144

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES – WHAT?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES – WHY?

“The purpose of the Disciplines is liberation from the stifling slavery to self-interest and fear. When the inner spirit is liberated from all that weighs it down, it can hardly be described as dull drudgery. Singing, dancing, even shouting characterize the disciplines of the spiritual life.”

Richard Foster, *The Celebration of Discipline*, p. 1-2

Discussion Questions

1. *What are some of the “hollow philosophies” of our Western world?*
2. *How do these lies impact our approach to the spiritual disciplines?*
3. *How would things change if we believed that God has given us the spiritual disciplines so that we can experience freedom and joy in Christ?*

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES – HOW?

How do we approach the spiritual disciplines
so that they are a *blessing*, not a *burden*?

1. FROM ENDS...TO _____

Have you ever made a particular spiritual discipline EVERYTHING?

**“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”
Jesus in John 5:39-40**

2. FROM LISTS...TO _____

Has a list ever changed your life?

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” 1 John 3:1

3. FROM DUTY AND DESIRE...TO _____

How is dependence different than duty, desire, and discipline?

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” Jesus in John 15:5

4. FROM WILLPOWER...TO _____

If we're primarily counting on our willpower, what does that reveal about us?

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to its regulations—'Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch'—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. Colossians 2:20-23

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.
2 Corinthians 3:18

5. FROM PUNCHING THE CLOCK...TO _____

To what are we most attentive?

"Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears." 1 Samuel 3:10

6. FROM LIFELESS ROUTINES...TO _____

What's the difference between brushing your teeth and going to the gym?

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2

...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. 1 Timothy 4:8

7. FROM EXPERTS...TO _____

If something's worth doing, isn't it worth doing poorly?

"Lord, teach us to pray." Luke 11:1

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES – WITH WHOM? FOR WHOM?

And [Jesus] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and for by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Ephesians 4:11-14

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden." Jesus in Matthew 5:14

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to Me. Get away with Me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with Me and work with Me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with Me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30, The Message

Discussion Questions

1. *Discuss one of the faulty approaches above and how it has impacted your life.*
2. *Which of these renewed approaches seems most helpful to you? Why?*
3. *What are the most important things to remember when we approach the spiritual disciplines? "When I open the Bible or pray or seek to be still (or whatever) this week, what do I need to remind myself in that moment?"*
4. *With God's help, talk about one thing you want to do in response to this discussion.*

Project for This Week

1. *Read The Common Rule (Earley) or The Celebration of Discipline (Foster).
Even better, read one of these with a friend or a group of friends.*
2. *Depending on the Lord, commit to practicing one spiritual discipline this week.
Ask someone to encourage you and hold you accountable.*
3. *Ask the Lord to draw you closer to Himself and to give you a taste of His freedom and joy.*
4. *As you follow Christ, look for opportunities to share Him with others who need Him.*