

## 10. Spiritual Discipline (Growing in Godliness)

In our culture the word discipline seems often to have negative connotations. We want to do what we want, when we want, as often as we want to do it. Most of us also want quick and easy fixes for the problems that we face and the consequences that we incur because of our sinful behavior. “Just take it away, Lord,” we pray and sometimes He does. But the sinful tendencies of the flesh remain, and there are times when seemingly out of nowhere we are beset with intense desires to go back. The Bible assures us that we need not go back. ***Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble*** (2 Peter 1:10 NKJV).

How then can we accomplish this? We know that trying harder never worked before, so we cannot expect it to work now. We also know from Scripture that we cannot earn our salvation. ***For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*** (Ephesians 2:8-9 NKJV) What then is the key to growing in godliness? It lies in disciplining ourselves spiritually.

Listen to what Richard Foster, author of “The Celebration of Discipline,” has to say about their purpose, “Spiritual Disciplines involve doing what we can do to receive from God the power to do what we cannot do. And God graciously uses this process to produce in us the kind of person who automatically will do what needs to be done when it needs to be done.”

These disciplines include study, meditation, prayer, fasting, solitude, silence, celebration, and simplicity among other things. While we can never earn favor with God (He loves us as much as He ever can because we are in Christ), we can position ourselves in a place where we can receive His power and know Him intimately. Much the same as physical discipline strengthens us physically, spiritual discipline strengthens us spiritually.

As former slaves of sin we must now present ourselves to be slaves of righteousness. And as my addiction was a downward progression my sanctification must be an upward progression. Just as standing still on a bicycle is impossible so it is impossible for us to stand still spiritually and prosper.

## 10. Spiritual Discipline

Meditation Passage for the week – 1 Corinthians 9

Spiritual Discipline – “For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things.” (2 Timothy 4:8)

### 1. **Purpose** and **function** of Spiritual Disciplines

- A. “Their purpose – their only purpose is to **place** us **before** God. They **do not produce** righteousness. Only He can do that.”
- B. “Spiritual Disciplines involve doing what we can do to **receive** from God the **power** to do what we cannot do. And God graciously uses this process to produce in us the kind of person who **automatically** will do **what** needs to be done **when** it needs to be done.” -Richard Foster

### 2. Partial List of Spiritual Disciplines

- A. **Fasting** - The **voluntary denial** of an otherwise normal function-most often food-for the sake of intense spiritual activity (**Matthew 6:17**)
- B. **Silence** - Closing our souls from “sounds,” whether they be noise, music, or words, so that we may better still the inner chatter and clatter of our noisy hearts and be increasingly **attentive** to **God** (**Psalm 141:3**)
- C. **Solitude** - The creation of an open, empty space in our lives by **purposefully abstaining** from **interaction** with other human beings so that we can be found by God and by which we are freed from competing loyalties (**Matthew 14:23**)
- D. **Guidance** - Experiencing an **interactive** friendship with God which gives **direction** and **purpose** to daily life (**2 Timothy 1:7**)
- E. **Service** – loving, thoughtful, and **active promotion** of the good of others and the causes of God in our world through which we experience the many little deaths of going beyond (**Mark 10:45**)
- F. **Confession** - Sharing our deepest **weaknesses** and **failures** to God and trusted others so that we may enter into God’s grace and mercy and experience His ready **forgiveness** and **healing** (**2 Samuel 12:13**)
- G. **Worship** - **Expressing** in words, rituals, and silent adoration the greatness, beauty and goodness of God by means of which we **enter** the supra-natural **reality** of the shekinah, or glory, of God (**Psalm 138:2**)