



The Joys and Fruits of Discipline

Zoom Bible Study | Tuesdays @ 7:00pm (CST)



June 6, 2023

Lesson Six

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.

V. Raymond Edman

Where discipline is lacking in your life and mine, spiritual growth is stunted because of it.

Discipline without direction is drudgery.

Jesus put it this way:

Mark 8:34 – 35: *Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it."*

Putting needed disciplines into your life is directed discipline—discipline that has an eternal purpose!

Spiritual Disciplines

Spiritual disciplines would include:

- Bible reading and study
- Prayer
- Fasting
- Worship
- Stewardship
- Meditation
- Serving
- *and more*

I will touch on two of these disciplines, remind you of them, and offer some suggestions.

Bible Reading

Taking in the word of God on a regular, structured basis, putting that discipline firmly established in your life will have its effect on you. Maybe you don't feel it every day, but you do it out of obedience, out of love. It is directed discipline—discipline with a purpose.

The bottom line is Read your Bible! Nobody can do it for you. Read your Bible!

Prayer

Reading the Bible should often lead you to pray into your life what you have read. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, and he did.



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In this passage from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is talking about spiritual disciplines.

Matthew 6:1 – 8

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

⁵ “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

He tells us not to pray like hypocrites who pray to show off to others.

If Bible reading and prayer are not firmly and consistently established in your life, I urge you to make this your priority—the first discipline you establish in your life.

If you read your Bible and pray just to check off a box, you’re missing the joy of discipline. Remember, we are focusing on disciples that are directed to an eternal purpose.

1 Timothy 4:7: *Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.*

Another translation says “rather, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”

2 Peter 1:5-6: *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness...*

Notice that between self-control (discipline) and godliness is perseverance.

Occasional self-control/discipline results in occasional godliness.

Enjoying the Fruit of Discipline

John 13:15 – 17: *I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

Here are some of the blessings that await you when you do what you know:

- You will like yourself so much better.
- You will shed a great deal of guilt.
- You will feel better physically and have more energy.
- You will be far more productive.
- Your relationships will improve.
- Your boss (if you have one) will be much happier with you.
- The quality of your work will improve.
- Your attitude will be much more positive.
- You'll be a much nicer person to be with.

- You'll use your time much more efficiently and effectively.
- You will greatly reduce your stress levels.
- You will look better.
- You will look younger.
- Your spiritual growth will greatly increase.
- Your life will bring far more glory to Jesus Christ.
- You'll be a much better witness to your world of your faith in Jesus.

Martin Luther wrote in his *Theologia Germanica* about the way people deal with order and rule in their lives, which we would translate into what we mean by discipline. He said some have order only because and when it is forced on them, others do so for the rewards that will be theirs, some think they need no order and scoff at any talk about it. But then he describes how a true believer should feel about order—or discipline:

"Fourth we have those who have been illumined by God and guided by the true Light. They do not practice the ordered life in expectation of reward. They do not want to acquire anything with the aid of reward, nor do they hope that they will some day reap some reward because of it. No, they do what they do in the ordered life out of love. . .

"They know, of course, that order and rectitude are better and nobler than the lack of it. So they want to keep the rules, but they also know that their salvation and happiness are not dependent on the observance of rules." (From *Devotional Classics* edited by Richard J. Foster and James Bryan Smith, published by Harper Collins 1993, page 148.)

This is the great advantage we have over those who know not our Lord Jesus Christ. We have the motivation to please Jesus, and the great reward of hearing his "Well, done, good and faithful servant."

A few last reminders:

- **Start with baby steps.**
- **Build discipline upon discipline.**
- **When you fail, start over again.**
- **Pray daily about the areas where you struggle most.**

If you recognize a discipline that is lacking in your life, or one that needs improvement, what are you going to do? What will you promise God to do? The blessing is in the doing.

Recommended Books:

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life by Donald S. Whitney

A Guide on Getting to Know God by Mary Lowman – available on our website at www.christianworkingwoman.org/product-category/bible-studies/

Recommended Reading Plans:

Bible Gateway

<https://www.biblegateway.com/reading-plans/>

Bible Study Tools

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-reading-plan/>