

## Church and Spiritual Disciplines (1 Timothy 4:6-9)

### Introduction

How does a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ grow in spiritual maturity? It is through spiritual disciplines.

- The spiritual disciplines are those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Discipline is defined as "training expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behavior." 1 Timothy 4:7, "train yourself for godliness."
- The goal of every spiritual discipline is — as this verse teaches — godliness. Godliness is another way of describing holiness, sanctification, and Christlikeness.
- To put it in other terms, the purpose of the spiritual disciplines is intimacy with Christ and conformity (both internal and external) to Christ.

There are few important spiritual disciplines that help us to train our spiritual life unto holiness.

### Word of God (Psalm 1:1-3; Joshua 1:8; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

The foremost of the spiritual disciplines is that involving the Word of God and constitutes the reading, meditation, and appropriation of Scripture.

- It is the very life of every Christian.
- "Reading is the exposure to Scripture but meditation is the absorption of Scripture," Jonathan Edwards.
- Psalm 1:1-3
- Joshua 1:8
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The benefits of this are:

- Reveal—giving us new insights regarding the already revealed truth of God
- Remind—replenishing our memory
- Rebuke—reproving that which is wrong
- Restore—reestablishing the joy of the Lord in us
- Revive—rekindling our love and passion for God

### Prayer (Romans 8:14-17)

The second important spiritual discipline is prayer.

- If the Word of God is the very life of Christian, prayer is the very breath of every child of God.
- Prayer is that unique experience by which we commune with God.
- God comes alongside us to lead us into a deeper and more real relationship with Him.
- God really makes us want to conform to Christ and His will for our lives. God slowly and graciously reveals Himself to us while we pray, and it is during those moments that we can more deeply understand and experience His love.
- Romans 8:14-17
- Luke 5:16; 6:12
- Psalm 55:16-17, 22

Jonathan Edwards, the great revival preacher of 18<sup>th</sup> century, was so devoted to prayer that it is hard to find a daily routine for him that wasn't saturated with it. He prayed alone when he arose, then had family prayer before breakfast. Prayer was a part of each meal, and he prayed again with the family in the evening. He prayed over his studies, and he prayed as he walked in the evenings. Prayer was both a discipline and a part of his leisure.

Benefits of prayer:

- Assurance that we are the children of God
- Confidence that He is with us
- Affirmation that He will never leave us and forsake us

### **Corporate Worship (Hebrews 10:19-25)**

Corporate worship is the spiritual discipline that Christians experience as a spiritual body. If the Word and prayer are personal disciplines corporate worship is interpersonal or congregational discipline.

- Corporate worship reminds us that we are a community.
- God patterned the Christian life not just as an individual, but a body of believers.
- Christians are not supposed to be an isolated island, but a community of believers.
- Hebrews 10:19-25
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 23-25
- Luke 4:16; Acts 20:7

Benefits of corporate worship:

- Experiencing the presence of God
- Experiencing the fellowship and company of God's people
- Opportunity to put to use the spiritual gifts for the edification of the Church
- Experiencing a foretaste of Heaven

### **Conclusion**

Christian life is a life of discipline, without which we will not be strong and fruitful in our relationship with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.