

BONUS CONTENT: Spiritual Disciplines | Rev 2 & 3 (Donald Whitney) -Episode 10

In His book *Spiritual Disciplines* Donald Whitney says, “In my own pastoral and personal Christian experience, I can say that I’ve never known a man or woman who came to spiritual maturity except through discipline. Godliness comes through discipline.”

The importance of Spiritual Disciplines.

- The letters to the 7 churches remind us how important it is to live for Jesus and to make the most out of my life in the here and now.
- Donald Whitney’s book on Spiritual Disciplines will help to show us what it looks like to live a life pleasing to God, growing in faith, and listening to the Spirit.
- SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES are practices or things that we do to cultivate our faith in Jesus.
- We need discipline to practice our faith as it can be difficult at times to walk by faith.

“From biblical times to our time, godly people have always been spiritually disciplined people.” (Donald Whitney)

We are responsible for doing our part to grow in our relationship with Christ.

- Paul tells Timothy, “train yourself for godliness”. **1 Tim 4:7-8**
- Spiritual disciplines can be hard at times BUT they are ways to help us grow.
- Spiritual disciplines bring great results in our lives.
- Discipline, training, effort is needed in our struggles of the flesh to bring us to a place of trusting God and cultivating our relationship with Him.
- Discipline discussion is NOT TO BE LEGALISTIC but to be practical.
- “Godliness requires disciplined worship.” (Donald Whitney) God is worthy and our response is to His love, not to earn His favor but to be closer to Him.
- We need loving accountability in this area to grow and to hold one another up and point us to Jesus.
- We need to put systems in place in our lives to grow our faith.
- Growth happens over time; time spent in His presence, enjoying His grace and persevering.
- Our part in maturing in the faith is to keep coming to Him; to know Him, trust Him and grow in our relationship with Him.

We need to have people speaking truth into our lives.

“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.” (Donald Whitney)

- A Pastor’s job is to help us to grow in our relationship with God.
- By the Spirit of God we can receive help in our desire to do great things for God.
- We can help and encourage one another to practice the disciplines and walk by faith.
- **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”** We want to look at what listening looks like.
- Disciplines of the faith are not just a one day a week service, but it is a daily walk with Jesus.

“Can we expect the flames of our worship of God to burn brightly in public on the Lord’s Day when they barely flicker for Him in secret on other days?” (Donald Whitney)

Cultivating our faith everyday through the practical spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith.

1. Implementing the Word of God (mediating, memorizing, obeying)

- Jesus says that all of scripture points us to Him. **John 5:39**

Brian Brodersen: “Christians cannot live victoriously when disconnected from the Word of God”

- Our God is one that speaks, and we can take time to know Him in His Word.
- Be ‘quick to listen to God’ and receive our counsel and wisdom from Him.

- Take time to READ, STUDY, MEDITATE, MEMORIZE and OBEY the Word of God that revives our souls. **Psalm 19:7**

“No Spiritual Discipline is more important than the intake of God’s Word. Nothing can substitute for it. There simply is no healthy Christian life apart from a diet of the milk and meat of Scripture.” (Donald Whitney)

PRACTICAL Tips:

- Have a reading plan , memorize scripture, and take the time to study it. (classes)
- Find verses that speak specifically to your struggle or needs.
- Listen to podcasts and hear God's Word .**Rom 10:17**
- Listen, hear, read and enjoy God’s Word.

2. Singing/worship/ praise

Psalm 84:4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! Selah

- When God’s people come together and sing, He is there. God Inhabits in the praises of His people.(**Psalm 22:3**)
- We are blessed when we do this because we focus our attention on God rather than on us.
- A great way to be in the presence of God is to sing praises to His name.

PRACTICAL Tips:

- Download some good worship music.
- Make a playlist and play in the background or throw on the headphones or sing out loud.
- Learn how to play some music and jam with friends.
- Go to a live worship service OR buy local tickets to bands when they are in your area.
- Get the family involved in singing.
- Pray to the Lord through song.

3. Fasting and Praying

- Jesus said when you pray and fast you align your will to God's will for "thy kingdom come". **Matt 6**
- As you are reading or singing pray through this time and talk with God.

PRACTICAL Tips:

- Make space to pray-in the car, go for a walk.
- Create a prayer journal.
- Schedule times to pray or set an alarm as a prayer reminder throughout the day.
- Attend prayer nights or schedule time to pray with others.
- Skip a meal, lunch break, or a few days to just to seek God.

4.Sabbath

- Sabbath is a spiritual discipline to take a day off to enjoy His grace.
- God told us to practice the sabbath for our good.
- Even in ministry, we need to take delight in God and His grace and practice the Sabbath.
- In our busy world this is VERY hard to slow down and stop but God says the Sabbath is holy and we are blessed in practicing it.
- In taking the Sabbath, we are trusting God to be God and allowing Him to rule.

PRACTICAL Tips

- Set a certain time aside and be proactive by preparing throughout the week.
- Make plans to seek God on the Sabbath.
- Enjoy the grace that God has given you and seek the things that refresh you and bring you closer to Jesus.
- Let people know you take a ‘Sabbath’ so not scheduling other things becomes the practice.

5. Giving thanks

- Have an attitude of gratitude always. **1 Thess 5:16-18**
- When we give thanks, we are recognizing God in that situation and being aware of His presence.
- Thanksgiving helps take away prideful thinking where life is all about us.

PRACTICAL Tips

- When something happens, thank God out loud! This creates a heart of thanksgiving!
- Take 20 minutes and just write/say everything you are thankful for.
- Gratefulness and thanksgiving to the Lord can be expressed in worship and other disciplines such as giving of tithes and offerings.

6. Fellowship

- Fellowship is important for our faith. **Heb 10:24-25**
- We are called to follow God together and to be relational as a family.
- God created us to be in community and have fellowship - so make time for it!

PRACTICAL Tips

- Be involved in a community group where we have loving accountability and live and grow together.
- Invite people to share at your dinner table.
- Purposely make time to develop relationships.
- Conferences provide opportunity for fellowship and training with likeminded people.

7. Serving

- We are practicing the ways of Jesus when we serve other people. **1 Pet 4:10**
- Be people that continually use our gifts to bless people.

PRACTICAL Tips

- Find out what your strengths and spiritual gifts are (take a spiritual test).
- Serve when no one knows about it, and not just in my church context.
- Talk with your pastor to see how you can practice the gifts you have in the body.
- Ask people specifically how you can serve them.

There are many other examples of spiritual disciplines found in scripture that can be practiced... Being Generous, evangelizing, making disciples, silence and solitude, etc.

Reflecting on the spiritual disciplines:

- HOW ARE YOU SEEKING GOD'S PRESENCE?
- WHAT SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES DO YOU NEED TO INCORPORATE IN YOUR LIFE?
- What is the next step for you to cultivate your faith?

"No one coasts into Christlikeness. Any progress in godliness requires Spirit-filled effort and purpose." (Donald Whitney)

The point of spiritual disciplines is to pursue Jesus!

"So while we cannot be godly without the practice of the disciplines, we can practice the disciplines without being godly if we see them as ends and not means." (Donald Whitney)

- The best thing we can do is not a specific spiritual discipline but to be in the presence of God...that is the point of the spiritual disciplines. **Psalm 27:4** This was King David's top priority!
- When we see Jesus and are in God's presence, we will never be the same!
- As Christians can spend our time doing so many things...good things BUT our top priority should be one that seeks Jesus! Martha and Mary- **Luke 10**
- Jesus said Mary had chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

- Jesus told his disciples that we **MUST** abide in Him to bear fruit .**John 15**
- Life cycle of knowing and seeking God builds trust , then obedience and abiding which produces fruit and God is glorified.
- Our mission is to **PURSUE** Jesus and then **PROCLAIM** Him. Out of the overflow of our heart ministry flows.
- Start with one discipline where the Holy Spirit is prompting you and pray and ask God to be in His presence through it, as it is His presence that changes everything!

Psalm 84:10-12 10 For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. 11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. 12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!

When we are in the presence of God it helps us build our faith!!!

We must continually be positioning our lives towards God and seeking His presence not to be legalistic BUT to trust, to know, to worship and love God.

Psalm 105:4 Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!

Spiritual disciplines are to help us KNOW JESUS and BE IN HIS PRESENCE!