

"Producing Spiritual Fruit"

John 15:1-8
November 26, 2017

INTRO: How important is it to YOU to BE a producer of spiritual fruit?

- Do you have the DRIVE & DESIRE to personally produce spiritual fruit?
- Do you have a DEFINITION of spiritual fruit?
- Do you have DISCERNMENT?
- Do you have DISCIPLESHIP commitments?
- Do you have the DISCIPLINES needed?
- Do you have DEFENSE strategies in place?

BIG IDEA: It requires intimacy with Christ to produce spiritual fruit

PREVIEW:

- 1. Rightly **PERCEIVING** Spiritual Fruit
- 2. Really **PRODUCING** Spiritual Fruit
- 3. Righteously **PROTECTING** Spiritual Fruit

T/S: **John Nix 1897 "fruit definition illustration"**

- We still have issues with definitions/applications
- Christ cared... definition & distribution of fruit

CONTEXT:

- John 13 = Jesus transitions from public to private
- Jesus is building up to John 15:1-12
- Sample passages & verses...

Jesus finishes His “public” ministry... John 12:47-48:

⁴⁷ If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.

Jesus begins His “private” ministry... John 13:1-5

¹ Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ⁴ rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

John 13:11 (ESV)

¹¹ ...He knew who was to betray Him; that was why He said, “Not all of you are clean.”

John 13:12-18 (ESV)

¹² When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them ¹⁸ I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’”

John 13:26-27 (ESV)

²⁷ Then after he had taken the morsel (of bread), Satan entered into him/Judas. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.”

John 13:31, 34-35 (ESV)

³¹ When he/Judas had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him...”

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 14:1&6 (ESV)

¹ “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.... ⁶ Jesus said... “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 14:12-17 (ESV)

¹² “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; **and greater works** than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, **this I will do**, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and **will be in you**.

John 14:21-24 (ESV)

²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him...”

²³ “...If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and **we will come to him and make our home with him**.

²⁴ Whoever does not love Me does not keep/obey My words

John 14:30-31 (ESV)

³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on Me, ³¹ but **I do** as the Father has **commanded** me, **so that** the world may know that I love the Father.

Rise, let us go from here.

SERMON TEXT:

John 15:1-8

¹ “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.
² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ ***Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.*** ⁵ ***I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*** ⁶ ***If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.*** ⁷ ***If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*** ⁸ ***By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.***

I. Rightly-PERCEIVING Spiritual Fruit

Extended Disciples-Path QUOTE

“Disciples produce fruit! According to John 15, there are two types of people who claim to follow Jesus: those who don’t produce spiritual fruit and those who do. This ‘fruit’ that Jesus expects from His followers starts with developing a personal character that mirrors Jesus’ character. It also includes the gathering of new believers into His kingdom – (a.k.a.) the practice of sharing the gospel message and making new disciples.

The people in the first group, those who are not bearing fruit, are confused about their connection to Christ. They are cultural Christians – they may go to church, they may know the right things to say, they may (even) know the right things to do, and they may firmly believe they are genuine believers. BUT they’re wrong... because they have produced no fruit. They are spiritually dead.

This is vitally important information, because verse 6 of Jesus’ discourse makes it clear that unfruitful branches will be removed from the vine. They will be gathered together, thrown into the fire, and burned. This is a picture of judgement (a.k.a. “hell”).

Q: What are some factors that cause people to believe they are following Jesus when they are not?

(insert response)

- Head knowledge
- Church attendance
- Higher “quantities” (without higher quality)
- “Good-person delusion”
- Being a “DO-er”
- PLASTIC FRUIT!!!

Q: Who do you know who consistently produces spiritual fruit for God’s kingdom?

The second category of people Jesus speaks of in this analogy is branches that do bear spiritual fruit. These are people who have a right and healthy relationship with Christ. They are truly His disciples.

Yet notice the emphasis in the second half of v.2: “He PRUNES every branch that produces fruit SO THAT it will produce MORE fruit.” When we live as Jesus’ disciples in this world, we will produce fruit for His kingdom. And when we produce fruit, we will be pruned by God Himself.

The idea of being pruned means that God will remove interests and activities that get in the way of bearing spiritual fruit. It’s God’s desire for His followers to bear more and more fruit... not to be content with our past... accomplishments.”

- DisciplesPath

T/S: God... wills & wants Spiritual fruit from His people... AND godly people **want, walk-in & work-out** Spiritual fruit!

Hear Jesus again...

8 ***By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.***

*See the both/and of
holy sovereignty & human effort. -JDP*

T/S: Key = learn how **to abide...** (*Spiritual Disciplines*)

II. **Really-PRODUCING** Spiritual Fruit

Don't miss the Christian **BULLS-EYE!**

Romans 8:29

“For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to BE conformed into the image of His Son (a.k.a. holiness or Christ-likeness or godliness).”

“It’s crucial — crucial — to understand that it’s not our pursuit of holiness that qualifies us to see the Lord. Rather, we are qualified to see the Lord by the Lord, not by good things we do.” – D.W.

- All spiritual fruit = fruit of the Spirit
- See the both/and of sovereignty & sweat
- For our part... spiritual disciplines are key!

1 Timothy 4:7

***“Discipline yourself
for the purpose of godliness”***

Spiritual Disciplines by Don Whitney

Forward by J.I. Packer:

“The foundations Don Whitney lays down are evangelical, not legalistic. He calls us to pursue godliness through practicing the disciplines out of gratitude for the grace that has saved us, not as self-justifying or self-advancing effort... He is in truth showing us the path of life.”

“The word discipline has disappeared from our minds, our mouths, our pulpits, and our culture. We hardly know what discipline means in modern American society. And yet, there is no other way to attain godliness; discipline is the path to godliness.” - JAY ADAMS

“Discipline without direction is drudgery.” – Whitney

“The alternative to discipline is disaster.”
- Vance Havner

Spiritual Disciplines DEFINED: “The Spiritual Disciplines are those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the habits of devotion & experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times.” - D.W.

CRITICAL: “Spiritual Disciplines are ACTIVITIES, not attitudes. Disciplines are practices, not character qualities, graces, or ‘fruit of the Spirit.’ Disciplines are things you DO...”

BOTTOM LINE:

“Spiritual Disciplines are means, not ends. The ends, the purpose of practicing the Disciplines, is godliness.”

DEFINITION of GODLINESS:

“Godliness is both closeness to Christ AND conformity to Christ, a conformity that’s both inward and outward, a growing conformity to both the heart of Christ and the life of Christ. Christlikeness is the goal.”

DISTINCTION: “While we cannot be godly without the practice of the Disciplines, we can practice the Disciplines without being godly – if we see them as an ‘ends’ and not a means.”

“Growth in holiness is a gift from God.”

- John 17:17
- 1 Thess. 5:23
- Hebrews 2:11

“You don’t follow someone accidentally.” – D.W.

*“Discipline is at the heart of
discipleship.”* – D.W.

CHALLENGING OBSERVATION:

“Despite the example of Jesus and the teaching of the New Testament... many professing Christians are spiritually undisciplined and seem to have little Christ-like fruit and power in their lives. However, many of them are remarkably disciplined in other areas of their lives.”

- D.W.

Biblical Spiritual Disciplines

1. Bible Intake for the purpose of godliness...

- I. Hearing God's Word
- II. Reading God's Word
- III. Studying God's Word
- IV. Memorizing God's Word
- V. Meditating on God's Word

2. Prayer for the purpose of godliness...

- I. Prayer Is Expected
- II. Prayer Is Learned
- III. Prayer Is Answered

3. Worship for the purpose of godliness...

- I. Worship Is... Focusing On & Responding To God
- II. Worship Is... Done In Spirit & Truth
- III. Worship Is... Expected Both Publicly & Privately
- IV. Worship Is... A Discipline To Be Cultivated

4. Evangelism for the purpose of godliness...

- I. Evangelism Is Expected
- II. Evangelism Is Empowered
- III. Evangelism Is A Discipline

5. Serving for the purpose of godliness...

- I. EVERY Christian Is Expected To Serve

- a. Motivated by obedience
 - b. Motivated by gratitude
 - c. Motivated by gladness
 - d. Motivated by forgiveness, not guilt
 - e. Motivated by humility
 - f. Motivated by love
- II. EVERY Christian Is Gifted To Serve

“Fellowship with God leads straight to obedience & good works.” - A.W. Tozer

6. Stewardship for the purpose of godliness...

- I. **The Disciplined Use of Time**
 - a. “because the days are evil...” Ephesians 5:15-16
 - b. “because time is short... James 4:14
 - c. You are accountable to God for your time
 - i. Romans 14:12
 - ii. 1 Corinthians 3:13-15
 - iii. Hebrews 5:12
 - iv. Matthew 12:36
 - v. Matthew 25:14-30
- II. **The Disciplined Use of Talent**
- III. **The Disciplined Use of Treasure**
 - a. God owns EVERYTHING you own
 - i. 1 Corinthians 10:26... “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof”
 - b. Giving is an act of worship... Philippians 4:18
 - c. Giving reflects spiritual trustworthiness

- i. Luke 16:11 says it all... *"if then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?"* - Jesus

*"Are you giving systematically to the Lord's work, or are you leaving it to feelings, to impressions made upon you through particular circumstances, or to striking appeals? If we do not give from principle **systematically**, we shall find that our one brief life is gone before we are aware of it, and that, in return, we have done little for that adorable One who bought us with His precious blood, and to whom belongs all we have & are."*

▪ **George Mueller**

7. Fasting for the purpose of godliness...

- I. Fasting Is Expected
- II. Fasting Is To Be Done For A Purpose
 - a. To strengthen prayer
 - b. To seek God's guidance
 - c. To overcome temptation...
 - d. To express love, dedication, & worship to God

8. Silence & Solitude for the purpose of godliness

- I. Valuable reasons for silence & solitude

- a. To follow Jesus Christ's example
- b. To minimize distractions in prayer & worship
- c. To regain a spiritual perspective
- d. To seek the will of God
- e. To learn control of the tongue

The busier you are and the more hectic your world, the more you need to plan daily spaces of silence and solitude. – D.W.

I commend solitude to any of you who are seeking salvation, first, that you may study well your case as in the sight of God. Few men truly know themselves as they really are. Most people have seen themselves in a looking-glass, but there is another looking-glass, which gives true reflections, into which few men look...

God's Word..." - C.H. Spurgeon

9. Writing for the purpose of godliness...

- I. Help in self-understanding & evaluation
- II. Help in expressing thoughts & feelings to the Lord
- III. Help in remembering the Lord's works

10. Learning for the purpose of godliness...

We must face the fact that many today are notoriously careless in their living and this attitude has found its way into the church.

We have liberty, we have money, and we live in comparative luxury. As a result, discipline has practically disappeared.

What would a violin solo sound like if the strings on the musician's instrument were all hanging loose, not stretched tight, not "disciplined"?

A. W. TOZER

- I. Learning Characterizes the Wise Person
- II. Learning Is Essential for Increased Godliness
- III. Learning Is Mostly By Discipline, Not Accident

11. Perseverance in the disciplines for the purpose of godliness...

- I. The Role of The Holy Spirit
- II. The Role of Fellowship
- III. The Role of Struggle

Closing Illustration

There are no shortcuts to godliness. But the flesh broods for an easier way than through the Spiritual Disciplines. It protests, "Why can't the Christian life be more

extemporaneous and unstudied? All this talk of (disciplining and) disciplining myself sounds legalistic and regimented and harder than I thought being like Christ should be. I just want to be spontaneous!”

John Guest responds well to this temptation:

“Discipline” has become a dirty word in our culture. . . . I know I am speaking heresy in many circles, but spontaneity is greatly overvalued. The “spontaneous” person who shrugs off the need for discipline is like the farmer who went out to gather the eggs. As he walked across the farmyard toward the hen house, he noticed the water pump was leaking. So, he stopped to fix it. It needed a new washer, so he set off to the barn to get one. But on the way, he saw that the hayloft needed straightening, so he went to fetch the pitchfork. Hanging next to the pitchfork was a broom with a broken handle. “I must make a note to myself to buy a broom handle the next time I get to town...”

By now it is clear that the farmer is not going to get his eggs gathered, nor is he likely to accomplish anything else he sets out to do. He is utterly, gloriously spontaneous, but he is hardly free. He is, if anything, a prisoner to his unbridled spontaneity.

The fact of the matter is that discipline is the only way to freedom...

Does the farmer’s day remind you of your spiritual life?

*“Freedom and discipline have come to be regarded as mutually exclusive, when in fact, freedom is not at all opposite, but is instead, the final **REWARD**, of discipline.”*

▪ **Elisabeth Elliot**

Discipline rewards us with freedom!

If your picture of a disciplined Christian is one of a grim, tight-lipped, joyless, half-robot... then you've missed the point.

Let us follow Jesus to joy (and fruitfulness)... through Spiritual Disciplines

T/S: *Let us follow Jesus to joy (and fruitfulness)... through Spiritual Disciplines*

III. Righteously-PROTECTING Spiritual Fruit

- So much of Scripture... 1 John, 2 Peter, Jude, etc.
- Owner vs. Hireling
 - Wolves in sheep's clothing...
 - See Jesus, Paul, Peter, John... on this issue
- Full Armor of God

"When it comes to wearing God's armor and living in, or going into spiritual warfare... Don't miss nor marginalize either the value or valor of having other, equally-armored worshipping-warriors, faithfully guarding your flank and back side... while you advance on point, in the midst of your Messiah's mission!" - JDP

CLOSE:

John 15:9-12 (ESV)

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.



One FAITH. One FAMILY. One FOCUS.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will BE My witnesses (locally, regionally, and globally)." – Acts 1:8

One Question: *WHAT DO YOU WANT?*
One Offer: *COME AND SEE.*
One Promise: *TRUTH IN LOVE!*

Our Truth-in-Love Distinctives: We are...

1. Responding to grace & repenting of sin...
2. Trusting the Bible & obeying God's Word...
3. Growing in-Christ & living Spirit-led...
4. Praying for guidance & following by faith...
5. Dying to self & carrying our cross...
6. BE-ing the Church & loving one another...(*truly* loving one another)
7. Equipping the saints & exemplifying supernatural unity...
8. Ministering as ambassadors & discerning matters shrewdly...
9. Worshipping God vertically & experiencing Him horizontally...
10. Proclaiming the Gospel (*no matter what*) & fishing for men...
11. Making disciples-warriors & winning spiritual-warfare...
12. Loving our King & serving His kingdom!

BRIDGE Manifesto = blueprint for biblical fruit producing

- The root system of a Redwood forest
- The DNA of an “Irish Elk”
- The living portrait of a charging “crash” of rhinos
- This is the closest place to heaven on earth...

John 16:1 (ESV)

¹ *“I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away*

VIDEO: *“Prone to Wander”*

Let's PRAY!

FRUIT The edible pulp surrounding the seed(s) of many plants. **Literal uses** Various types of fruit are mentioned frequently in Scripture. Among the most common are grapes, figs, olives, pomegranates, and apples (perhaps to be identified with apricots or quince). Israel, in contrast to her neighbors, recognized the process by which trees reproduce by means of seeds carried in fruit to be a part of God's good plan at creation ([Gen. 1:12,29](#)). The continuing fruitfulness of Israel's trees was dependent on faithfulness to the covenant ([Deut. 28:4,11,18](#)). The first fruit to ripen was offered to God ([Ex. 23:16](#); [Neh. 10:35](#)).

Figurative uses The fruit of the womb is a common expression for descendants ([Gen. 30:2](#); [Deut. 7:13](#); [Ps. 127:3](#); [Isa. 13:18](#)). Fruit often indicates a thought close to our word results.

The fruit of the Spirit is the results of the Spirit's workings in the lives of believers ([Gal. 5:22-23](#)).

Similar is the use of fruit where we would speak of manifestations or expressions. The fruits of righteousness ([Phil. 1:11](#); [Jas. 3:18](#)), of repentance ([Matt. 3:8](#)), of light ([Eph. 5:9](#)) are expressions of righteousness, repentance, and moral purity. Jesus cautioned that false prophets could be identified by the fruit they produced ([Matt. 7:15-20](#)), that is, by the qualities manifested in their lives. Jesus similarly warned of the necessity of bearing fruit that was compatible with citizenship in the kingdom of God ([Matt. 21:43](#)). Fruit sometimes has the sense of reward ([Isa. 3:10](#); [John 4:36](#); [Phil. 4:17](#)). Fruit is also used as a picture for Christian converts ([Rom. 1:13](#); [1 Cor. 16:15](#)).

- **Holman Bible Dictionary.**

Spiritual Disciplines

(by D. Whitney)

Forward by J.I. Packer: “The foundations Don Whitney lays down are evangelical, not legalistic. He calls us to pursue godliness through practicing the disciplines out of gratitude for the grace that has saved us, not as self-justifying or self-advancing effort... He is in truth showing us the path of life.”

“The word discipline has disappeared from our minds, our mouths, our pulpits, and our culture. We hardly know what discipline means in modern American society. And yet, there is no other way to attain godliness; discipline is the path to godliness.”

- JAY ADAMS

Chapter One: Spiritual Disciplines for the purpose of godliness...

“Discipline without direction is drudgery.” – Whitney

Don't miss the Christian bulls-eye, as described in **Romans 8:29**... *“For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to BE conformed into the image of His Son (a.k.a. holiness or Christ-likeness or godliness).”*

“It's crucial — crucial—to understand that it's not our pursuit of holiness that qualifies us to see the Lord. Rather, we are qualified to see the Lord by the Lord, not by good things we do.” – D.W.

“...when the Holy Spirit indwells someone, that person begins to prize and pursue holiness. Thus, as we have seen in Hebrews 12:14, anyone who is not striving for holiness will not see the Lord. And the reason he or she will not see the Lord in eternity is because he or she does not know the Lord now, for those who know Him are given His Holy Spirit, and all those indwelled by the Holy Spirit are compelled to pursue holiness.” - D.W.

“And so, the urgent question every Christian should ask is, “How then shall I pursue holiness, the holiness without which I will not see the Lord? How can I become more like Jesus Christ?”

We find a clear answer in 1 Timothy 4:7: “Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” (NASB). ”

“According to this verse, you “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”

“I will maintain that the only road to Christian maturity & godliness (a biblical term synonymous with Christlikeness and holiness) pass through the practice of Spiritual Disciplines... When we remember this, the Spiritual Disciplines become a delight instead of drudgery.” - D.W.

Spiritual Disciplines DEFINED: “The Spiritual Disciplines are those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the habits of devotion & experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times.” - D.W.

“Disciplines are means of blessings for followers of Jesus and a part of growth in godliness.”

CRITICAL: “Spiritual Disciplines are ACTIVITIES, not attitudes. Disciplines are practices, not character qualities, graces, or ‘fruit of the Spirit.’ Disciplines are things you DO...” - D.W.

“There are specific practices we are to do sometimes that cultivate generally being like Jesus all the time.” - D.W.

Beware the difference and distinction between “generic” or personally defined spiritual disciplines vs. the true, biblical disciplines.

“The Spiritual Disciplines found in Scripture are sufficient for knowing and experiencing God, and for growing in Christlikeness... per 2 Timothy 3:16-17” - D.W.

NOTE: “The Spiritual Disciplines are practices derived from the gospel, not divorced from the gospel. When the Disciplines are rightly practiced, they take us deeper into the gospel of Jesus and its glories, not away from it as though we’ve moved on to more advanced levels of Christianity.” - D.W.

BEWARE:

“If the gospel becomes that by which we slip into the kingdom, but all the business of transformation turns on post-gospel disciplines and strategies, then we shall constantly be directing the attention of people away from the gospel, away from the cross and resurrection. Soon the gospel will be something that we quietly assume is necessary for salvation, but not what we are

excited about, not what we are preaching, not the power of God.” - D.W.

BOTTOM LINE:

“Spiritual Disciplines are means, not ends. The ends, the purpose of practicing the Disciplines, is godliness.” – D.W.

DEFINITION of GODLINESS:

“Godliness is both closeness to Christ AND conformity to Christ, a conformity that’s both inward and outward, a growing conformity to both the heart of Christ and the life of Christ. Christlikeness is the goal.” - D.W.

DISTINCTION: “While we cannot be godly without the practice of the Disciplines, we can practice the Disciplines without being godly – if we see them as an ‘ends’ and not a means.” - D.W.

SUMMARY:

“So the Spiritual Disciplines are those personal and interpersonal activities given by God in the Bible as the sufficient means believers in Jesus Christ are to use in the Spirit-filled, gospel-driven pursuit of godliness, that is, closeness to Christ and conformity to Christ.” - D.W.

Spiritual Disciplines – The Means To Godliness

“Godly people have always been spiritually disciplined people... Godliness comes through discipline.” - D.W.

God uses 3 primary catalyst for changing us:

- People – works from the outside in...
- Circumstances – also works outside in...
- Spiritual Disciplines – works inside out!

“Growth in holiness is a gift from God.”

- John 17:17
- 1 Thess. 5:23
- Hebrews 2:11

“Recognize that even the most iron-willed self-discipline by itself will not make us more holy; instead, it may make us more like Pharisees.” - D.W.

See Colossians 1:29.... “The efforts of a Christian and the work of God can occur simultaneously in a person indwelled by the Holy Spirit... Paul spoke of his labors to help believers become ‘mature in Christ,’ declaring:

‘For this I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me.’

NOTE: In Colossians 1:29 Paul said that he himself was toiling, BUT, he then affirmed that the energy for this struggle came from Christ!

DEFINITION: “Discipline”

- Greek word = gymnasia
- English translation = gymnasium & “discipline”
- The word means: “to exercise”
- “It’s a sweaty word with the smell of the gym.”
- Thus... Spiritual Disciplines = spiritual exercises.
- Spiritual Disciplines strengthen godliness

Zacchaeus illustrates Spiritual Disciplines (Luke 19:1ff)

- He placed himself in the path of God’s grace
- He was seeking Jesus
- “The Lord, by His Spirit, still travels down certain paths, paths that He Himself has ordained and revealed in Scripture. We call these paths the Spiritual Disciplines, and if we will place ourselves on these paths and look for Him there by faith, we can expect to encounter Him.” – D.W.

The Spiritual Disciplines – God’s Will For Christians:

CALIBRATION:

- “Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” is a command of God (not a suggestion).
- Holiness is NOT an option (see 1 Peter 1:15-16)
- Thus, Spiritual Disciplines are not options...
- See Matthew 11:29... “Take My yoke upon you...”
- Even more, see Luke 9:23; “...take up your cross”
- Following & learning still require discipline...

“You don’t follow someone accidentally.” – D.W.

***“Discipline is at the heart of
discipleship.”*** – D.W.

Both Galatians 5:22-23, as well as 2 Timothy 1:7 tell us that God gives Christians “self control” for godliness!

CHALLENGING OBSERVATION:

“Despite the example of Jesus and the teaching of the New Testament... many professing Christians are spiritually undisciplined and seem to have little Christ-like fruit and power in their lives. However, many of them are remarkably disciplined in other areas of their lives.”

- D.W.

EXAMPLE: *“I’ve seen Christians who are faithful to the church of God, who frequently demonstrate genuine enthusiasm for the things of God, and who are committed to the preaching of the Word of God, yet who trivialize their effectiveness for the kingdom of God through lack of discipline.... “I know how to do everything in the church, but I don’t know how to read the Bible and pray.” **Spiritually such people are a mile wide and an inch deep. There are no deep, time-worn channels of communing discipline between them and God. They have dabbled in everything but disciplined themselves in nothing.”***

There is **DANGER in NEGLECTING** the Spiritual Disciplines

- “Some who fail to practice the Disciplines disregard them because they simply have no appetite for them, and they have on appetite for them because they have no hunger for God.
- They do not know God, so the God-given means of personally experiencing & enjoying God have little appeal.
- To them, the Spiritual Disciplines are tedious religious duties to be endured as little as conscience or reputation will allow...

- Spiritual Disciplines are NOT a banquet of God, on which their famished souls long to feed as much as possible.”

Just as with athletic, musical, or intellectual gifts, so also spiritual gifts must be developed by discipline in order to bear spiritual fruit. Thus, the danger of neglecting the Spiritual Disciplines is the danger of bearing little spiritual fruit.” - D.W.

There is freedom in embracing Spiritual Disciplines:

- Many hear the term Spiritual Disciplines and think of bondage & burdens – things they have to do, not freedom.
- Nevertheless, there is freedom in the Christian life that comes not through indolence, but discipline.
- We might call discipline “the price” we must pay for freedom...

“Freedom and discipline have come to be regarded as mutually exclusive, when in fact, freedom is not at all

*opposite, but is instead, the final
REWARD, of discipline.”*

▪ Elisabeth Elliot

Discipline rewards us with freedom!

“Those who are ‘free’ to quote Scripture are those who have disciplined themselves to memorize God’s Word.”
– D.W.

Scripture reminds us that self-control, such as that expressed through the Spiritual Disciplines, must persevere before it ripens into the mature fruit of godliness.

- Read 2 Peter 1:6 and observe closely the sequence of spiritual development:
 - “...to self control...”
 - “...perseverance...”
 - “...and to perseverance, godliness”
- The bridge between Spirit-empowered self control and godliness is perseverance.
 - Occasional self-control results in occasional godliness
 - True godliness requires a lifetime of perseverance

If your picture of a disciplined Christian is one of a grim, tight-lipped, joyless, half-robot... then you've missed the point.

Focus on the person & work of Jesus in each of the Disciplines.

By means of the Disciplines, let the truths of the gospel restore your soul.

*Let us follow Jesus to joy... through
Spiritual Disciplines*

Chapter Two & Three

Bible Intake for the purpose of godliness...

- VI. Hearing God's Word
- VII. Reading God's Word
- VIII. Studying God's Word
- IX. More Application
 - a. If your growth in godliness were measured by the quality of your Bible-intake, what would be the result?

- b. What is one thing you can do to improve your intake of God's Word?
- X. Memorizing God's Word
 - a. Memorizing supplies spiritual power
 - b. Memorization strengthens your faith
 - c. Memorization prepares us for witnessing and/or counseling
 - d. Memorization provides a means of God's guidance
 - e. Memorization stimulates meditation
 - f. How to memorize Scripture:
 - i. Know you can do this...
 - ii. Have a plan...
 - iii. Write out the verse(s)
 - iv. Draw your own "picture reminders"
 - v. Memorize the verse word-for-word
 - vi. Find a method of accountability
 - vii. Review & meditate every day
- XI. Meditating on God's Word
 - a. Power – see the blessing & purpose of meditating on God's Word...
 - b. Promise – see God's promises for those who meditate upon His Word:
 - i. Joshua 1:8
 - ii. Psalm 1:1-3
 - iii. James 1:26
 - c. How to meditate upon God's Word:
 - i. Select an appropriate passage...
 - ii. Select a particular method of meditation...
 - 1. Emphasize different words in the text
 - 2. Rewrite the text in your own words

3. Formulate a principle from the text (ask the question: "What does it teach?")
4. Think of an illustration of the text (ask the question: "What picture explains it?")
5. Look for applications of the text
6. Ask how the text points to the Law or the Gospel
7. Ask how the text points to something about Jesus
8. Ask what question is answered or what problem is solved by the text
9. Pray through the text
10. Memorize the text
11. Create an artistic expression of it
12. Ask the Philippians 4:8 questions:
 - i. What is honorable about this?
 - ii. What is just or right...
 - iii. What is pure...
 - iv. What is lovely...
 - v. What is commendable...
 - vi. What is excellent...
 - vii. What is praise-worthy....
13. Ask the Joseph Hall (Puritan) Q's:
 - i. What is it? (define/describe it)
 - ii. What are its divisions/parts?
 - iii. What causes it?
 - iv. What does it cause (fruit)?
 - v. What is its place/location/use?
 - vi. What are its qualities and attachments?

- vii. What is contrary or contradictory, or different to it?
 - viii. What compares to it?
 - ix. What are its titles or names?
 - x. What are the testimonies or examples of Scripture about it?
14. Set & discover a minimum number of insights from the text
 15. Find a link or common thread between all the paragraphs or chapters you've read
 16. Ask how the text speaks to your current issue or question
 17. Use "meditation mapping"
 18. Don't rush... take your time!

d. Applying God's Word

- i. The value of applying God's Word
- ii. Expect to discover an application
- iii. Understand the text
- iv. Meditate to discern application
- v. Ask application-oriented questions of the text
 1. Does the text reveal something I should believe about God?
 2. Does the text reveal something I should praise or thank or trust God for?
 3. Does the text reveal something I should pray about for myself or others?
 4. Does the text reveal something I should have a new attitude about?

- 5. Does the text reveal something I should make a decision about?
- 6. Does the text reveal something I should do for the sake of Christ, others, or myself?
- vi. Respond specifically to God's Word
- e. More application:
 - i. Will you begin a plan of memorizing God's Word?
 - ii. Will you cultivate the discipline of meditating on God's Word?
 - iii. Will you prove yourself an "applier" of God's Word?

Chapter Four

Prayer for the purpose of godliness...

- IV. Prayer Is Expected
 - a. Jesus expects us to pray
 - b. God's Word makes His expectation clear
 - i. Colossians 4:2... "Continue steadfastly in prayer..."

- ii. 1 Thessalonians 5:17... “Pray without ceasing”
- V. Prayer Is Learned
 - a. By praying...
 - b. By meditating on Scripture...
 - c. By praying with others
 - d. By reading about prayer...
- VI. Prayer Is Answered
- VII. More Application
 - a. Because prayer is expected, will YOU pray?
 - b. Since prayer is learned, will YOU learn to pray?
 - c. Since prayer is answered, will you PERSISTENTLY pray?

Chapter FIVE

Worship for the purpose of godliness...

- V. Worship Is... Focusing On & Responding To God
- VI. Worship Is... Done In Spirit & Truth
- VII. Worship Is... Expected Both Publicly & Privately
- VIII. Worship Is... A Discipline To Be Cultivated
- IX. More Application
 - a. Will you commit yourself to the Discipline of daily worship?
 - b. Will you put actual worship into your acts of worship?

Chapter SIX

Evangelism for the purpose of godliness...

- IV. Evangelism Is Expected
 - a. Matthew 28:18-20
 - b. Mark 16:15
 - c. Luke 24:46-47
 - d. John 20:21
 - e. Acts 1:8
- V. Evangelism Is Empowered
- VI. Evangelism Is A Discipline
- VII. More Application:
 - a. Because evangelism is expected, will you obey the Lord and witness?
 - b. Because evangelism is empowered, will you believe that God can use your words in the salvation process of others?
 - c. Because evangelism is a discipline, will you plan for it?

Chapter SEVEN

Serving for the purpose of godliness...

- III. EVERY Christian Is Expected To Serve
 - a. Motivated by obedience
 - b. Motivated by gratitude
 - c. Motivated by gladness
 - d. Motivated by forgiveness, not guilt
 - e. Motivated by humility
 - f. Motivated by love
- IV. EVERY Christian Is Gifted To Serve
 - a. Spiritual gifts
 - b. Serving is often hard work
- V. More Applications:
 - a. Worship empowers serving; serving expresses worship. Godliness requires a disciplined balance between the two.
 - b. You are expected to serve AND gifted to serve... BUT are you willing to serve?

*“Fellowship with God
leads straight to obedience
and good works.”*

- A.W. Tozer

Chapter EIGHT

Stewardship for the purpose of godliness...

- IV. The Disciplined Use of Time
 - a. Use time wisely “because the days are evil”
 - i. Ephesians 5:15-16
 - ii. See also Acts 19:23 – 20:1
 - b. Wise use of time is the preparation for eternity
 - c. Time is short... James 4:14
 - d. Time is passing... 1 John 2:17
 - e. The remaining time is uncertain...
 - i. Proverbs 27:1
 - ii. Psalm 31:15
 - f. Time lost cannot be regained... Philippians 3:13-14
 - g. You are accountable to God for your time
 - i. Romans 14:12
 - ii. 1 Corinthians 3:13-15
 - iii. Hebrews 5:12
 - iv. Matthew 12:36
 - v. Matthew 25:14-30
 - h. Time is so easily lost
 - i. Proverbs 26:13-14
 - ii. Proverbs 24:33-34
 - i. We value time at death...
 - i. Proverbs 5:11-13
 - ii. John 5:22-29
 - j. Time’s value in eternity
 - i. Luke 16:22-25
 - ii. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

- V. The Disciplined Use of Money
 - a. God owns EVERYTHING you own
 - i. 1 Corinthians 10:26 (quoting Psalm 24:1):
“The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof”
 - ii. Exodus 19:5... “All the earth is Mine...”
 - iii. Job 41:11... “Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.”
 - iv. We are stewards of His (cf. Genesis 39:5-6)
 - b. Giving is an act of worship...
 - i. Philippians 4:18
 - ii. Deuteronomy 16:16
 - c. Giving reflects faith in God’s provision... Mark 12:41-44
 - d. Giving should be sacrificial & generous... 2nd Corinthians 8:1-5
 - i. See the action...
 - ii. See the attitude!
 - e. Giving reflects spiritual trustworthiness
 - i. Luke 16:10-13
 - ii. This is a HUGE issue in our context & culture
 - iii. Luke 16:11 says it all... “if then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?” - Jesus the Christ
 - f. Giving expresses love, not legalism
 - i. 2 Corinthians 8:7
 - ii. 2 Corinthians 9:7
 - iii. 1 Corinthians 16:2
 - g. Give willingly, thankfully, & cheerfully

- h. Giving is an appropriate response to real needs
 - i. Acts 2:43-45
 - ii. Acts 4:32-35
 - iii. Acts 11:27-30
- i. Giving should be planned & systematic
 - i. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2
 - ii. See Jesus on tithing... Matthew 23:23

“Are you giving systematically to the Lord’s work, or are you leaving it to feeling, to impression made upon you through particular circumstances, or to striking appeals? If we do not give from principle systematically, we shall find that our one brief life is gone before we are aware of it, and that, in return, we have done little for that adorable One who bought us with His precious blood, and to whom belongs all we have & are.”

▪ **George Mueller**

- j. Generous giving results in bountiful blessing
 - i. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8
 - ii. Acts 20:35... “...more blessed to give...”
- VI. More Applications:
- a. Are you prepared for the end of time?
 - b. Are you using your time as God would have you use it?
 - c. Are you willing to accept God’s principle for giving?
 - d. Are you giving like you mean it?

Chapter NINE

Fasting for the purpose of godliness...

- III. Fasting Explained
- IV. Fasting Is Expected
 - a. Matthew 6:2-7 & 16-18; 9:14-15; 16:16-17; 23:23
 - b. Acts 9:9; 13:2' 14:23
 - c. Jesus gave us a warning in Matthew 6:1... (cf. v.18)
- V. Fasting Is To Be Done For A Purpose
 - a. To strengthen prayer
 - b. To seek God's guidance
 - c. To express grief
 - d. To seek deliverance or protection
 - e. To express repentance & return to God
 - f. To humble one's self before God
 - g. To express concern for the work of God
 - h. To minister to the needs of others
 - i. To overcome temptation & dedicate yourself to God
 - j. To express love & worship to God
- VI. More Application:
 - a. Will you confess & repent of any fear of fasting?

- b. Will you fast as the Holy Spirit directs?
- c. Will you plan a fast of dedication now, as an expression of your willingness to fast from now on?

Chapter TEN

Silence & Solitude for the purpose of godliness...

- II. Explanation of Silence & Solitude
 - a. Think of silence & solitude as complementary disciplines to fellowship... (focusing on God)
 - b. Silence & solitude are usually found together
 - c. Culture conditions us to be comfortable with noise & crowds, not with silence & solitude, and to feel more at home in a mall than at a park.
- III. Valuable reasons for silence & solitude
 - a. To follow Jesus Christ's example
 - i. Matthew 4:1
 - ii. Matthew 14:23
 - iii. Mark 1:35
 - iv. Luke 4:42
 - b. To minimize distractions in prayer
 - c. To express worship to God
 - d. To express faith in God
 - e. To seek the salvation of the Lord

To Seek the Salvation of the Lord

Times of silence and solitude to seek the salvation of the Lord can refer either to a non-Christian seeking salvation from sin and guilt in Christ or to a believer seeking God's salvation from certain circumstances. **The words of Jeremiah in Lamentations 3:25-28** are appropriate in either case: *"The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone in silence when it is laid on him"* (emphasis added).

In a sermon on this text, C. H. Spurgeon said:

I commend solitude to any of you who are seeking salvation, first, that you may study well your case as in the sight of God. Few men truly know themselves as they really are. Most people have seen themselves in a looking-glass, but there is another looking-glass, which gives true reflections, into which few men look. To study one's self in the light of God's Word, and carefully to go over..." - C.H. Spurgeon

f. To be physically & spiritually restored

- g. To regain a spiritual perspective
- h. To seek the will of God
- i. To learn control of the tongue
- IV. Suggestions For Silence & Solitude
 - a. "Minute retreats"
 - b. A goal of daily silence & solitude
 - c. Getting away for silence & solitude
 - d. Special places
 - e. Trade off daily responsibilities
- V. More Application:
 - a. Will you seek daily times of silence & solitude?
 - b. Will you seek extended times of silence & solitude?
 - c. Will you commit yourself to the Disciplines of silence & solitude?

QUOTES: **The busier you are and the more hectic your world, the more you need to plan daily spaces of silence and solitude.** – D.W.

Retire from the world each day to some private spot, even if it be only the bedroom (for a while I retreated to the furnace room for want of a better place). Stay in the secret place till the surrounding noises begin to fade out of your heart. . . . Give yourself to God and then be what and who you are without regard to what others think. . . . Learn to pray inwardly every

moment. . . . Call home your roving thoughts. Gaze on Christ with the eyes of your soul. . . . All the above is contingent upon a right relation to God through Christ and daily meditation on the Scriptures. Lacking these, nothing will help us; granted these, the discipline recommended will go far to neutralize the evil effects of externalism and to make us acquainted with God and our own souls... As daily sleep and rest refresh the body, so daily silence and solitude refresh the soul. These Disciplines have a way of airing out the mind and ironing out the wrinkles..."

- A.W. Tozer

Chapter ELEVEN

Writing for the purpose of godliness...

- IV. Explanation of Journaling
- V. Value of Journaling
 - a. Help in self-understanding & evaluation

- b. Help in meditation
 - c. Help in expressing thoughts & feelings to the Lord
 - d. Help in remembering the Lord's works
 - e. Help in creating & preserving a spiritual heritage
 - f. Help in clarifying & articulating insights
 - g. Help in monitoring goals & priorities
 - h. Help in maintaining the other Spiritual Disciplines
- VI. Ways of Journaling
- VII. More Application:
- a. As with all the Disciplines, journaling can be fruitful at any level of involvement
 - b. As with all the Disciplines, journaling requires persistence through dry times.
 - c. As with all the Disciplines, you must start journaling before you will experience its value

Chapter TWELVE

Learning for the purpose of godliness...

We must face the fact that many today are notoriously careless in their living. This attitude finds its way into the church. We have liberty, we have money, we live in comparative luxury. As a result, discipline practically has disappeared. What would a violin solo sound like if the strings on the

musician's instrument were all hanging loose, not stretched tight, not "disciplined"?

A. W. TOZER

- IV. Learning Characterizes the Wise Person
- V. Fulfilling the Greatest Commandment
- VI. Learning Is Essential for Increased Godliness
- VII. Learning Is Mostly By Discipline, Not Accident
- VIII. Learning In A Variety of Ways
- IX. More Application:
 - a. Will you discipline yourself to become an intentional learner?
 - b. Where will you start?
 - c. When will you start?

Chapter THIRTEEN

Perseverance in the disciplines for the purpose of godliness...

IV. The Role of The Holy Spirit

“D. A. Carson warns, “What is universally presupposed by the expression ‘spiritual discipline’ is that such disciplines are intended to increase our spirituality. From a Christian perspective, however, it is simply not possible to increase

one's spirituality without possessing the Holy Spirit and submitting to his transforming instruction and power.”[1]

In *The Discipline of Grace*, Jerry Bridges concurs:

A major temptation in the self-discipline approach to holiness, however, is to rely on a regiment of spiritual disciplines instead of on the Holy Spirit. I believe in spiritual disciplines. I seek to practice them. . . . But those disciplines are not the source of our spiritual strength. The Lord Jesus Christ is, and it is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to apply His strength to our lives.

Wherever the Holy Spirit dwells, His holy presence creates a hunger for holiness. His primary task is to magnify Christ (see John 16:14-15), and it is He who gives the believer a desire to be like Christ. In our natural condition we have no such passion. But in the Christian, the Spirit of God begins to carry out the will of God to make the child of God like...”

V. The Role of Fellowship

VI. The Role of Struggle

VII. More Application:

a. Would you be godly? Then practice the Spiritual Disciplines in light of eternity.

b. Would you be godly? There is no other way except through the Spiritual Disciplines.

Closing Illustration

The scriptural path to godliness has been made plain. Would you be godly? Then, said the Lord in 1 Timothy 4:7, “Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” (NASB). That is the way and there is no other.

There are no shortcuts to godliness. But the flesh broods for an easier way than through the Spiritual Disciplines. It protests, “Why can’t the Christian life be more extemporaneous and unstudied? All this talk of disciplining myself sounds legalistic and regimented and harder than I thought being like Christ should be. I just want to be spontaneous!”

John Guest responds well to this temptation:

“Discipline” has become a dirty word in our culture. . . . I know I am speaking heresy in many circles, but spontaneity is greatly overvalued. The “spontaneous” person who shrugs off the need for discipline is like the farmer who went out to gather the eggs. As he walked across the farmyard toward the hen house, he noticed the pump was leaking. So he stopped to fix it. It needed a new washer, so he set off to the barn to get one. But on the way he saw that the hayloft needed straightening, so he went to fetch the pitchfork. Hanging next to the pitchfork was a broom with a broken handle. “I must make a note to myself to buy a broom handle the next time I get to town,” he thought. . . .

By now it is clear that the farmer is not going to get his eggs gathered, nor is he likely to accomplish anything else he sets out to do. He is utterly, gloriously spontaneous, but he is hardly free. He is, if anything, a prisoner to his unbridled spontaneity.

The fact of the matter is that discipline is the only way to freedom; it is the necessary context for spontaneity.

Does the farmer's day remind you of your spiritual life—spontaneous but sporadic? Do you flitter from one thing to another with apparently little effect or growth in grace?"