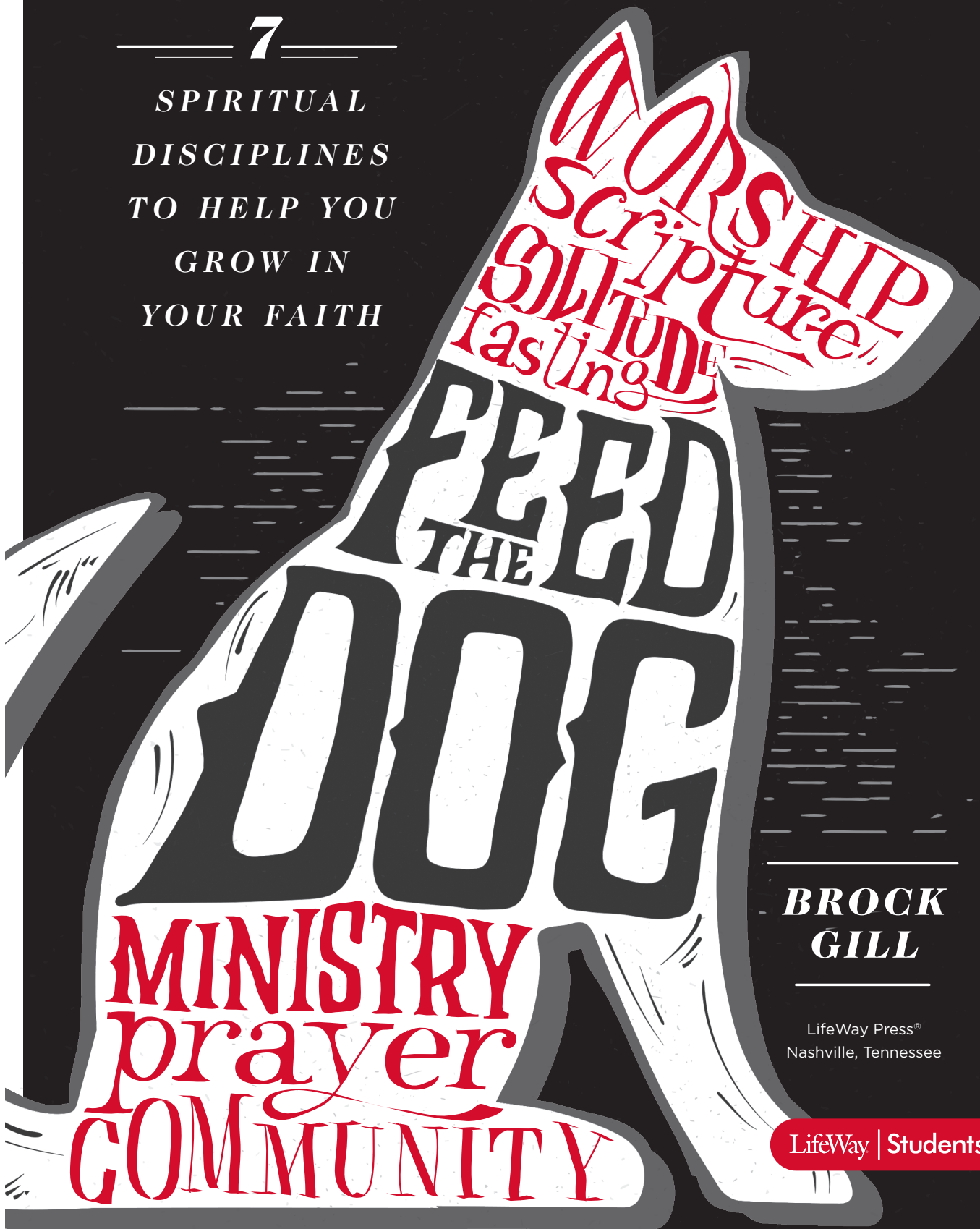


7

SPIRITUAL
DISCIPLINES
TO HELP YOU
GROW IN
YOUR FAITH



**BROCK
GILL**

LifeWay Press®
Nashville, Tennessee

LifeWay | Students

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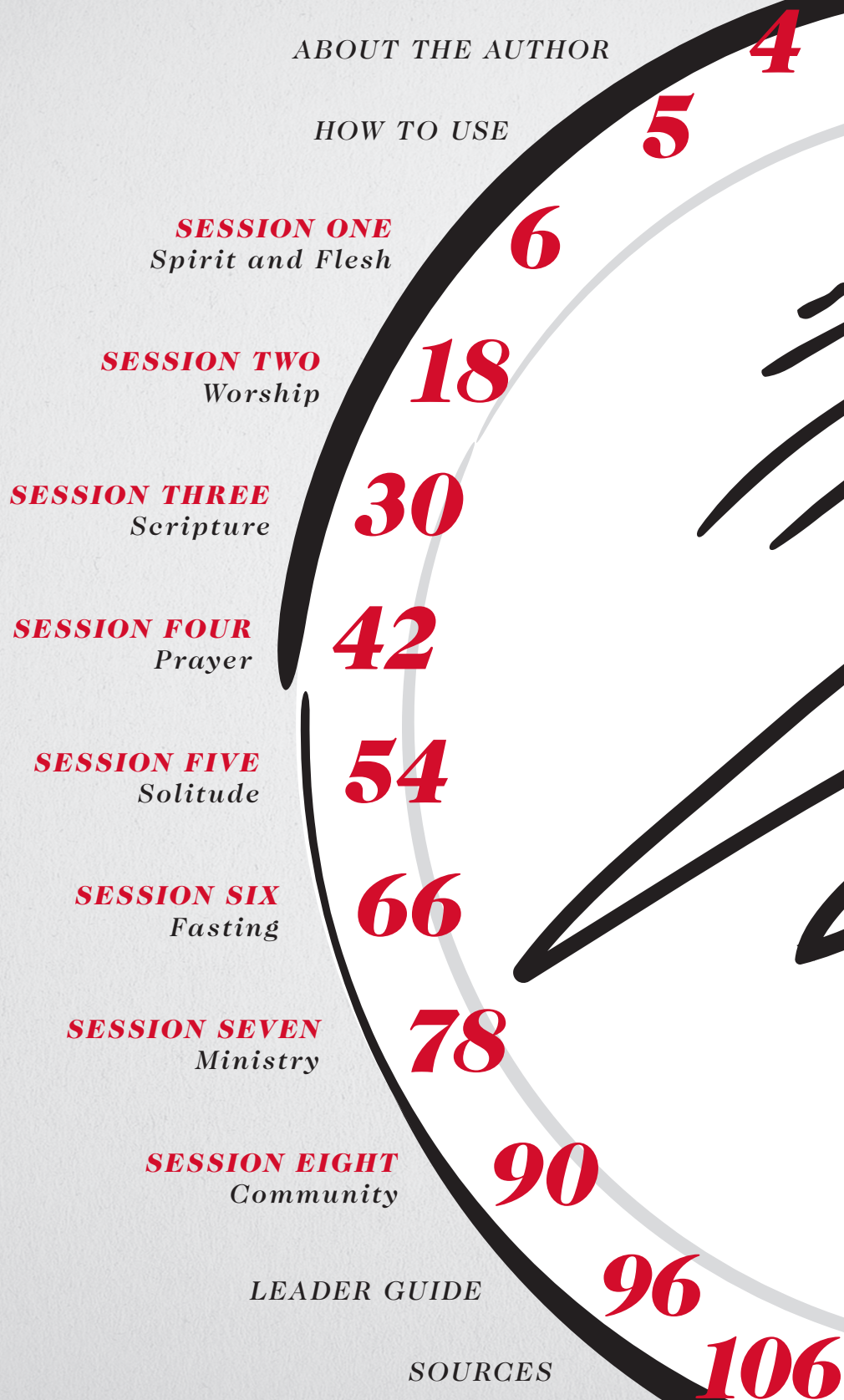
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



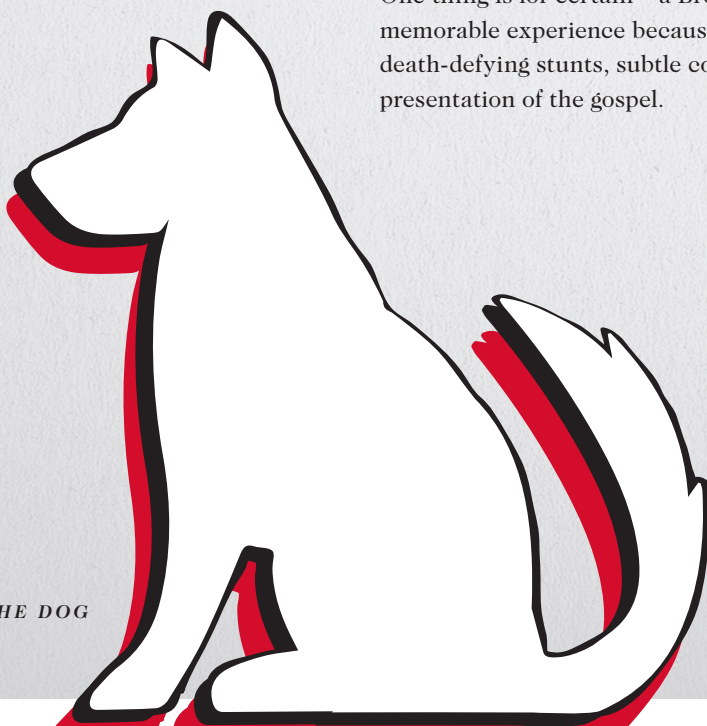
Brock has set the pace for a new generation of edgy, daring illusionists as he amazes audiences with his unique stage show, dry wit, and mind-blowing escapes.

With a passion for reaching people with the gospel truth that changed his own life, Brock went back to college and began performing at church outreach events. News of his creative method of evangelism quickly spread and he began to receive invitations almost immediately.

Since those first events, God has taken Brock's ministry across the United States and the globe, and his heart for the lost has grown. Understanding that people have short attention spans and a desire to be entertained visually, he has learned how to quickly draw in an audience and keep them on the edge of their seats. Brock's message for Christ is clear and effective. He has seen God touch many lives through his ministry.

A major highlight of Brock's career was the release of a documentary called "The Miracles of Jesus." Produced by British Broadcasting Company (BBC) and Discovery Channel, this project gave Brock the opportunity to objectively investigate firsthand the miracles of Jesus in the New Testament. Brock took on the role of lead investigator for the project, an assignment that took him all the way to Israel and Malta. The three-hour program debuted on Discovery Channel.

One thing is for certain—a Brock Gill show will be a memorable experience because of his grand illusions, death-defying stunts, subtle comedy, and unique presentation of the gospel.



SPIRIT AND FLESH

What comes to mind when you hear the word *discipline*? Most people today don't like this word—it conjures up images of punishments like going to time-out or serving a detention. Discipline does not always refer to punishment. It can also refer to the practice of training ourselves in a skill. We all discipline ourselves in various ways. The athlete disciplines herself by running every day and eating high-protein foods. The musician disciplines himself by practicing every day and memorizing notes and chord progressions. The satisfaction of doing anything with excellence only comes to those who put in the work. The same is true of our walks with Christ. If you want to walk in the fullness of joy promised to followers of Jesus, you must learn the value of discipline and commit to faithfully doing the things that lead to spiritual growth and joy in Christ. In *Feed the Dog*, we will unpack seven key practices or disciplines that will help us grow in our relationship with the God who made us. These disciplines will guide us to live out His purpose for our lives.

HOW TO USE

VIDEO GUIDE – Begin each group session by watching the video from Brock Gill that's included in the Leader Kit. Read the Scriptures together and discuss the questions that follow.

GROUP DISCUSSION – Each session unpacks the value and impact of one spiritual discipline. Group leaders will want to read through this section carefully, reviewing each discussion question to prepare to guide students during group time.

DEVOTIONS – There are six one-page personal devotions for group members included in each session. Encourage group members to set aside at least 10-15 minutes each day for completing these devotions. Instruct students to jot down questions they might have so you can address any concerns in the next group time.

LEADER GUIDE – The Leader Guide at the end of this resource contains the main point of each session, an optional activity or illustration to introduce the session, and a challenge to help students engage in the discipline covered in each session on their own.

SESSION **1**

***SPIRIT AND
FLESH***



VIDEO

GUIDE

Start by watching the video for Session 1. It begins with an illusion and Brock introducing the study. He shares about the two natures every believer has and how we are called to feed the spirit.

BROCK SHARES THE SECRET TOOLS JEAN-EUGENE ROBERT-HOUDIN HAD AND HOW HE CHANGED THE COURSE OF HISTORY BECAUSE OF THE TIME HE SPENT PRACTICING.

Spiritual disciplines require the investment of work and time. It takes time for us to be more and more like Jesus. We have to set our minds on feeding the spirit rather than the flesh (Col. 3:2).

What comes to mind when you hear the word “discipline”?

Do you tend to see spiritual disciplines as more of a duty or a delight?

Think about worship, Scripture, prayer, solitude, fasting, ministry, and community. Are these spiritual disciplines a big part of your life now? What spiritual disciplines do you want to grow in?

List some things you want to learn or gain from this study.

How will you seek to practice the spiritual disciplines this week?

GROUP DISCUSSION

IN 1967 MY FATHER WAS IN COLLEGE AND HAD JUST MET A GIRL WHO WOULD EVENTUALLY BECOME MY MOM.

At the end of the semester, he went home to see his family in south Louisiana. As he pulled into the driveway, he saw his dad standing at the door with a worried look on his face. My dad knew the reason for his concern before he even got out of his car. His father (my grandfather) was holding a letter. My dad had been drafted by the United States Army and had ten days to report to base.

Dad withdrew from college and quickly found himself in the jungle of Vietnam. He was given a beautiful German Shepherd named Fritz. His first assignment was to feed the dog and then the training began. Every day my dad fed, trained, and played with Fritz. In a short time, that dog became his closest companion. Fritz even saved my dad's life. My dad's job was to walk the perimeter of the Army base by himself at night with nothing more than his M-16 rifle and his trusted dog. He felt alone and was often scared, but he trusted his dog. After all, Fritz could smell and hear the enemy coming long before anyone else.

One night, some soldiers near the perimeter fell asleep in a bunker. They never woke up and the enemy slipped in and killed them in their sleep. My dad knew he could never fall asleep. He and the dog had to stay alert. He made sure he and his dog were always healthy because their lives depended on it.

My father still recalls the last day he spent in Vietnam. He had to say goodbye to his best friend, Fritz, who had saved his life so many times. He fed his dog and then jumped onto a helicopter and went home.

As I listen to my dad's story of his time in the military, I think about how the dog was taken care of and healthy because of how invaluable he was. Fritz would save him from the schemes of the enemy.

Similarly, there was a man who had two dogs. The dog he fed became the biggest and healthiest. Likewise, every follower of Christ has two natures: spirit and flesh. Whichever one we feed will grow to be the biggest.

In everything we do, we are either feeding our spirit or our flesh. Our behaviors and disciplines (or lack of) provide nourishment to either our spirit-side or flesh-side of our soul.

Whatever you take in—food or TV or something else—will show up in your life. For example, I have a friend who loves to watch TV. She will often watch an entire season of a show in one day while lying on her couch. I noticed that when she does, her language and thinking change. Her attitude mimics the TV shows

she's watching. I remember when she was having a tough time at her job and she began thinking about what she wanted to do and where she wanted to live. She then explained that she was considering working for the CIA. I thought it was a bit strange because she had no background in that type of work. It turns out she was watching popular TV shows with female actors in the CIA! The show she filled her days with caused her to want to make major changes in her life.

If you consistently fill your mind with something, you think about that thing all the time. I am not saying we should never watch TV, but we certainly should think carefully about the things we give our attention to and fill our minds with. Do they feed the flesh, or do they feed the Spirit?

WHAT IS THE FLESH?

"Flesh" is commonly used by Paul, the author of the Book of Romans, to refer to sinful nature. Flesh is the worldly side of us that is bent toward sin. The flesh is the opposite of the Spirit and is against God. Flesh is self-centered and looks to please man rather than God. Simply put, flesh is the sinful nature. When we think life is all about doing what we want and living for ourselves, we are living in the flesh. Our flesh is the rebellious nature. As F. F. Bruce said, "The flesh . . . is doomed to die."¹

WHAT IS THE SPIRIT?

When we choose to follow Christ, He dwells inside of us through the Holy Spirit. He puts His Spirit in us. That Spirit is life. The Spirit is the One who leads us to desire God, obey God, and to love Him. The Spirit prays for us—He is on our side.

As Christ-followers, the Spirit of God is alive inside of us. When the Spirit is in us, we will produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). When we sin, we are living in the flesh. We must train ourselves to walk in the Spirit with a prayerful mind and a heart that is submissive to God.

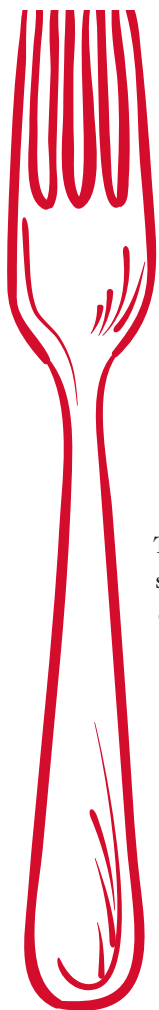
By feeding the Spirit, we are not literally giving food to the Holy Spirit. Rather, we are submitting to the working of the Spirit. When we "feed" the Spirit, then we starve the flesh. Feeding the Spirit or the flesh means we give it attention. We must, as Paul says, not "make plans to gratify the desires of the flesh" (Rom. 13:14).

READ ROMANS 8:13.

*. . . because if you live according to the flesh (sinful nature), you are going to die.
But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body (flesh), you will live.*

Compare the fruit of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-18,19-20) to the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). What happens when we give attention to each?

Our spirit and flesh are willing to eat as much as we feed them. It's up to us to be disciplined enough to know how and what to feed. Whatever we spend time thinking about, watching, listening to, talking about, and so on, reveals the condition of our hearts. If someone reads car magazines every day, then he or she will likely long for a nicer car. If someone is reading and understanding Scripture daily, then it is more likely that he or she will be thinking about spiritual things and have the wisdom provided by God's Word.



Read the following passage from Galatians 5:16-18.

I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Why is it so important for us to walk by the Spirit? How do we do this?

The flesh is always hungry. It's willing to eat whatever trash you feed it. Sometimes it's not so obvious that our food is not good for us. Sometimes we feed our flesh things that seem okay, or good enough, or not harmful. Remember that good is not best. God has what's best, but often we settle for good enough. We must starve the flesh, rather than feed it.

Read the following verses: Romans 8:7-8, 13:14; Galatians 5:19-22. What does each passage say about the flesh and the consequences that follow when we feed it?

The flesh is hostile to God. It's simple: If you live by the flesh, then you are not and will not be pleasing God. This should bother you. It should get your attention.

The flesh desires sin. It's obvious. These verses make clear that there is fruit of the flesh and fruit of the Spirit. Look at the list, and determine which type of life you want to have today, two years from now, or even ten years from now. I personally want a life that is pleasing to God and one that produces the fruit of the Spirit.

So, what action steps can we take to make sure we feed the Spirit instead of the flesh? Here's where the spiritual disciplines come into play.

WHAT ARE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES?

The spiritual disciplines are essential to your faith in Christ—these practices help you grow in your walk with the Lord. Think of these as adventures or as the growth process on your journey with Jesus rather than as chores. Think of the spiritual disciplines as nourishment for your soul and enjoy the time and process of implementing these practices in your daily life.

Have you ever wondered why some people seem to grow in the faith and others fall away? Have you noticed people in your church or school who have made commitments to follow Christ but later seem to be just as worldly as the next?

How can you make sure your walk with Christ is genuine?

I believe the difference between those who live for God after high school (or today) and those who do not, can be traced back to these disciplines. If you avoid these things, in a few short years you can expect to not be living a life of faith. However, if you practice these things, you will grow to become the man or woman God has called you to be. The disciplines are not fruit, values, ideas, or intentions. The disciplines are things you do—you have to act!

So, what are these specific disciplines? I could list many, but let's focus on seven. These seven practices are essential to growing in your faith:

- worship
- Scripture
- prayer
- solitude
- fasting
- ministry
- community

Get ready. Through truth and practicing these spiritual disciplines, you will be equipped to feed the right dog—the spirit, not the flesh.

***“Two natures beat within my breast
The one is foul, the one is blessed
The one I love, the one I hate
The one I feed will dominate.”²
—Anonymous***



1 DEVOTION STUDY DAY ONE

ALTHOUGH BY THIS TIME YOU OUGHT TO BE TEACHERS, YOU NEED SOMEONE TO TEACH YOU THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF GOD'S REVELATION AGAIN. YOU NEED MILK, NOT SOLID FOOD. NOW EVERYONE WHO LIVES ON MILK IS INEXPERIENCED WITH THE MESSAGE ABOUT RIGHTEOUSNESS, BECAUSE HE IS AN INFANT. BUT SOLID FOOD IS FOR THE MATURE—FOR THOSE WHOSE SENSES HAVE BEEN TRAINED TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL.

HEBREWS 5:12-14

I love motorcycles. For a few years, I was an amateur motocross racer and it was the most fun I've ever had. But, not all of it was enjoyable. It was hard work and there were trials along the way.

One weekend I was racing in an endurance race in Kentucky. It was a hot September day, and we were to race through the woods for over two hours, nonstop. Motocross racing is among the most physically demanding sports on the planet. Every muscle is used and your heart rate increases rapidly.

I thought I was prepared. I had just trained for and run a half marathon and was in good shape. I had plenty of water and sports drinks. But, as the race progressed, I became extremely tired. Many other competitors had dropped out due to exhaustion, but I continued.

Near the end, I heard other motorcycles behind me revving their engines as a signal for me to slow down to let them pass me, but no one was there. I was hallucinating. It was weird. I continued until I crossed the finish line, but I got off my bike and could not talk. It turned out that I was close to having a heat stroke because I pushed my body too hard and didn't drink enough fluids.

The lesson for me here was simple: I needed to drink more fluids and eat the right foods to keep my body healthy. The same goes for our spiritual lives. What we consume will either make us healthy or sick. We need to feed ourselves good, nutritious, spiritual food in order for us to grow in godliness.

Have you ever been thirsty or dehydrated physically? What about spiritually?

What is the good, spiritual food and drink that you need to make a part of your daily life? Are you already practicing some of the spiritual disciplines? If not, how will you make them a part of your life this week?

I SAY THEN, WALK BY THE SPIRIT AND YOU WILL CERTAINLY NOT CARRY OUT THE DESIRE OF THE FLESH. FOR THE FLESH DESIRES WHAT IS AGAINST THE SPIRIT, AND THE SPIRIT DESIRES WHAT IS AGAINST THE FLESH; THESE ARE OPPOSED TO EACH OTHER, SO THAT YOU DON'T DO WHAT YOU WANT.

GALATIANS 5:16-17

How do we walk by the Spirit as Galatians 5:16 instructs us to do? Which side, the Spirit or the flesh, are you feeding the most? How can you tell?

A man had two dogs; the one he fed grew the biggest.

We have spirit and flesh. We need to feed the right dog. Let me explain. I am not literally saying that the Holy Spirit is a dog. Think of it as you would if you had two dogs. What would happen if you fed one and not the other? One would starve and eventually die. Now, apply this metaphor to your spiritual life.

What areas or parts of your life are of the flesh and need to be starved?

My wife and I are away from home over 200 days of the year, so we don't have any pets or plants, or anything else that requires feeding or tending to. One time we decided to get one of those bamboo plants because we were told that they require almost no attention. So, my wife promised to water it and keep it alive. Guess what? It died. So we bought another one and another and another. They all died. Why? Because we were not around to tend to them. We didn't keep them watered. We killed multiple plants that were supposed to be impossible to kill.

Neglect or time away will kill just about anything. We can't neglect our spirit. Feeding the right dog takes discipline. This doesn't come naturally, so we must be intentional. If we neglect feeding the spirit, then the flesh will naturally grow. And you know what? It will grow out of control. In the coming weeks, you will learn how to feed your spirit so that you will grow to have a strong and healthy spiritual life.

Have you ever forgotten to feed or water a plant or a pet? What happened?

Why is it so important for us to make the spiritual disciplines a regular habit in our lives? List some action steps you will take to remind yourself to feed the spirit instead of the flesh.

3 DEVOTION STUDY DAY *THREE*

LET US WALK WITH DECENCY, AS IN THE DAYTIME: NOT IN CAROUSING AND DRUNKENNESS; NOT IN SEXUAL IMPURITY AND PROMISCUITY; NOT IN QUARRELING AND JEALOUSY. BUT PUT ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND DON'T MAKE PLANS TO GRATIFY THE DESIRES OF THE FLESH.

ROMANS 13:13-14

Three things I like are pizza, chocolate, and ice cream. But I really like pie.

Generally I try to eat foods that are healthy though, and most of the time I stick to this philosophy. There are times, however, like vacation, celebrations, or Thanksgiving where I go crazy and eat all of the things I like without counting calories or thinking about the consequences. Over the years I've seen a pattern. Typically I will only eat poorly for a few days around Thanksgiving but after a few days my will is weak. My appetite for unhealthy food begins to take over. I generally continue eating things that are filled with sugar a few days after Thanksgiving. That turns into Christmas and soon I realize that my eating habits have completely changed and I am saying yes to all kinds of foods I used to say no to.

How does this happen? Lack of discipline is the short answer. Every January I find myself with extra pounds and tight-fitting pants and it's not until I literally feel the effect of my eating habits that I am motivated to change.

Your flesh, your sin nature, is kind of like my appetite around Thanksgiving. It will always be hungry. No matter how much you feed your flesh, it will never be satisfied. It always wants more than you can feed it and the results are never good. Your flesh does not have your good in mind (1 Pet. 2:11).

READ ROMANS 13:13-14 AGAIN.

In these verses, I see a clear picture of the flesh. And in the last part of verse 14, Paul tells us to not even consider how to gratify the desires of the flesh, but rather to clothe ourselves with Jesus!

How are you most tempted to feed your flesh? How will you clothe yourself with Jesus this week?

List some ways you will practice the spiritual disciplines and make them a daily part of your life.

DEVOTION STUDY DAY **FOUR** **4**

BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE,
KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, AND SELF-
CONTROL. THE LAW IS NOT AGAINST SUCH THINGS.

GALATIANS 5:22-23

Recently I traveled to Central America for some of my shows. We journeyed way out onto an island off the coast of Nicaragua known as Rama. We arrived at a small community where we would do a show and share the gospel with the local people there.

My team and I grew extremely tired and thirsty from our extended travel and lack of sleep. We started getting grumpy (maybe a little *hangry* too). At that point we realized we were dehydrated and water was not enough to keep up with the demands of the hot and humid climate.

A local man said “follow me.” He took us across the island into an area filled with coconut, mango, and other fruit trees. The people began to climb up and cut off pieces of fruit for us to eat. Then they cut the fruit open and gave it to us to drink. Immediately, we began to feel the results of the fruit; it completely satisfied our thirst and provided the electrolytes we needed. Fifteen minutes later, our headaches were gone and we were rejuvenated and ready to serve.

The Bible describes the fruit of the Spirit, but also fruit(s) of the flesh.

READ GALATIANS 5:19-21.

These things are obvious. The Spirit is not involved in these things. These are a direct result from our sinful nature (the flesh). When we feed the flesh, we will produce fruit. The fruits of the flesh are obviously not godly and will lead us down the road that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13).

However, when we are in Christ, we have the Spirit who produces fruit in us and leads us down the path of life (Prov. 15:24). The evidence of the Spirit will also be obvious.

There is nothing more incredible than sweet fruit or a refreshing drink in times of physical thirst. Likewise, let's do what we can to feed our spirit and allow the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of the Spirit in us to quench our spiritual thirst.

Look at your life. Do you produce fruit of the flesh more than the fruit of the Spirit? How can we produce fruit of the Spirit as opposed to the flesh?

Pray that God will prepare your heart for this study and to walk in the Spirit.

5 DEVOTION STUDY DAY FIVE

A WOMAN OF SAMARIA CAME TO DRAW WATER. "GIVE ME A DRINK," JESUS SAID TO HER, BECAUSE HIS DISCIPLES HAD GONE INTO TOWN TO BUY FOOD. "HOW IS IT THAT YOU, A JEW, ASK FOR A DRINK FROM ME, A SAMARITAN WOMAN?" SHE ASKED HIM. FOR JEWS DO NOT ASSOCIATE WITH SAMARITANS. JESUS ANSWERED, "IF YOU KNEW THE GIFT OF GOD, AND WHO IS SAYING TO YOU, 'GIVE ME A DRINK,' YOU WOULD ASK HIM, AND HE WOULD GIVE YOU LIVING WATER."

JOHN 4:7-10

There was a woman who was embarrassed to be seen in public, so she went to draw water from a well in the middle of the day. She probably did this to avoid bumping into others. Why? Because she had been married five times and was currently living with someone who was not her husband. She likely wanted to avoid the drama. This story of the woman at the well is found in John 4.

READ THE ENTIRE PASSAGE—JOHN 4:1-26.

What jumps out to me is this: Jesus told her that the water she was drinking would leave her thirsty, but He had living water and that if she drank from it, she would never thirst again.

She had probably been trying to find love in her relationships with many different men. She had tried drinking the "water of this world" and it left her thirsty. But when she drank from the living water, her life was changed! The best way to cure your thirst is to drink from the right well. Jesus is the only water that will keep us satisfied.

Oftentimes people try to satisfy that thirst and yearning with other things. Some believe that if their life could just have some adjustments, then they will be satisfied, or have peace or joy. Some try to satisfy this emptiness with friends, or a relationship, while others turn to drinking, smoking, or even eating. I have also seen some try and fill that hole in their heart with money.

Nothing on this earth will ever fully satisfy our thirst. Only the living God can give you living water that will quench your soul's thirst. If you are longing for more, if you are searching, if you lack peace, if you have been chasing things of the world and realize nothing works, then look to Jesus. He is the living water your soul needs!

What things or people are you trying to fill your life with that are not worthy of your time? Are you finding your satisfaction in Jesus? If not, surrender to Him today.

BUT SOLID FOOD IS FOR THE MATURE—FOR THOSE WHOSE SENSES
HAVE BEEN TRAINED TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL.

HEBREWS 5:14

My uncle is a police officer in south Louisiana. Several years ago he was called to a house in the middle of nowhere. People honestly didn't even know anyone lived in this remote area. As he drove up to the dilapidated mobile home with no electricity or water, he was not prepared for what he was about to witness.

He went inside to find a 15-year-old boy along with his 13-year-old brother both wearing diapers and nothing else. Their teeth were rotten and unformed, and their bodies severely underdeveloped. He found that these boys were still being bottle fed—still drinking milk and not eating solid food. Their parents, who were mentally ill, had not take proper care of them. As a result, they were severely malnourished. They acted like babies in many ways despite their age. It was the saddest thing my uncle has seen in over 30 years as a police officer.

What would happen if we only ate food that didn't have much nutritional value? For example, if you ate Skittles every day, how do you think your body would respond? On the other hand, if your diet consists of vegetables and foods high in protein with only occasional sweets, how do you think your body would respond? See where this is going? It's a choice. Choose to eat healthy food so you will be healthy or suffer the consequences. We need healthy spiritual food, or we won't make it. We must be mature and able to distinguish between good and evil, as Hebrews 5:14 reiterates.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:2-3 as well. What does the illustration of milk and solid food mean? How does it relate to where we are in our spiritual maturity?

What disciplines or practices are you currently engaged in? Are these practices helping you grow to be more like Jesus? Why or why not?

In this study we will discover the keys to living a healthy spiritual life. Some of those disciplines will be discussed and examined on a deep level. Some of my favorite disciplines are studying the Word, praying, fasting, ministry, solitude, worship, and community. These are essential to the growth of every believer.

Prepare yourself to dive into a feast of things that will feed your spirit. Begin by asking God to help you. Ask God to help you to live a life that is set apart and focused on serving Him. Ask for help to discipline yourself to seek His face.