

YOU

Sermon Series: Spiritual Disciplines: Becoming More Like Jesus

To be used with: The Benefit of Spiritual Disciplines

Sermon Title Possibilities: Being Committed to Spiritual Disciplines

Scripture: Philippians 2:12-18

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *“Spiritual Disciplines: Becoming More Like Jesus,”* this sermon explores the nature of practicing spiritual disciplines. It is not possible to truly engage in the practice of spiritual disciplines without some much-needed work. This work is not to be done with a negative attitude and the one engaging in the work needs to follow the manual that has been provided.

Introduction: It is 2021 and this means that 2020 is behind us. Many of us are glad to see the past year behind us. Let’s hope and pray that the things of 2020 will be behind us as well. Even though it is a new year, we can rest assured that spiritual disciplines are timeless. We start a new series this week looking at spiritual disciplines. We begin this week by looking at timeless truths concerning spiritual disciplines so that we are equipped to practice them regularly.

1. Spiritual disciplines are to be practiced (v. 12)

Starting a new routine can be intimidating, especially if this is something that you have not done before. If, however, you are familiar with the routine, then the task does not seem so daunting. The church at Phillipi was familiar with what needed to be done as Paul told them, “you have always obeyed.” He was encouraging them to build upon their rich history of obedience to God’s word.

In a similar manner the opportunity to practice spiritual disciplines is something that we too have great familiarity. We know the importance of reading God’s word, spending time in prayer, journaling, etc. We might be able to look at our past and discover times when we have been faithful, like the church at Phillipi was faithful. This should encourage us in that we know what to do. All we need to do is return to what we know.

2. We practice spiritual disciplines without complaining (v. 13-14)

Many, if not all of us, would say that it is our desire to have God change us. We know what needs to be changed, and we greatly desire for Him to show Himself faithful and true in working in us for His glory. When we practice spiritual disciplines, He does change us. Paul told the church at Phillipi, “it is God who is working in you.” As we practice the disciplines that we know, God personally responds to our obedience. His work in us is done “according to His good purpose.” God is good and this is more than a cliché statement. This does not mean that all of our circumstances are good. All we need to do is look at multiple characters throughout the Bible to see that we can encounter

difficult circumstances. God, however, can use these circumstances for His good as He changes us.

3. We follow the manual when practicing spiritual disciplines (v. 16)

(This can be a time for congregational participation.) With a show of hands, how many chose to assemble Christmas gifts without consulting the manual? How many have ever done this only to return to the manual and start all over? It would have been better to acknowledge from the beginning that the designer of the product is wiser than the one trying to assemble it.

We all have a chance to learn from our Christmas mistakes because God has given us a manual to practice spiritual disciplines. He is calling us to “hold firm to the word of life.” Hold firm, in the original language, shows a personal action that is to be done on a continual basis. Practicing spiritual disciplines is something that is to be done over and over. We do this by holding firm the word of life. Therefore, the practice of the disciplines will always involve the study and application of God’s word.

Conclusion: The practice of spiritual disciplines begins with salvation. We can know what to do and be found faithful in striving after these things without grumbling. But, if we do not “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling” (v. 12), then we will have effectively missed the mark. Paul is not advocating a works-based salvation; nothing could be further from the truth. Instead, he is calling the church to personally reflect upon their individual standing before Christ.

If you have not personally done this, then let this be the day that you acknowledge Christ as Lord and begin to practice spiritual disciplines in earnest.

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