

Notes: Richard Foster writes: “Spiritual discipline involves doing what we can do to receive from God the power to do what we cannot do. And God graciously uses this process to produce in us the kind of person who automatically will do what needs to be done when it needs to be done. “Just as athletes must train and work at their sports to win we must work at our walk with the Lord. We must have spiritual discipline.

I. Spiritual discipline is a battle of the mind. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; Our goal has to be to capture our imagination; to change our imagination to see the things of God. Spiritual discipline is designed to bring us into God’s presence. That does not happen automatically. God has given us tools to help such as prayer, the Bible, church, Bible studies, other believers, spiritual gifts and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. We must ask God to help us develop a lifestyle where we will learn about Him.

1. Be consistent in reading the Bible. 2 Timothy 3:15-17 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Notice the end result of using the Bibles is the man of God is perfect (complete) equipped to do the works God has called him to do.

2. Do not need to fear the process of spiritual discipline. 2 Timothy 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. God does not want us to serve Him with fear. God also does not want us to serve Him fearing the world, events or trials we might face or even the imaginations of our minds. Instead he wants us to serve Him using His power and strength as it is provided to us through the Holy Spirit. That same Holy Spirit reminds us how much God loves us, fills our minds with the truth about the nature of God and reveals the meaning of the Bible as we read. A sound mind is a mind driven by the wisdom of the knowledge of God. Spiritual discipline leads us to be able to set our minds on the Lord. The key to spiritual discipline is surrender.

3. Be sure to practice humility. James 4:7-10 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. There are some great spiritual exercises listed here.

A. Submit to God. That means surrender my will to God acknowledging He has the right to tell me what to do and when to do it.

B. Resist the devil. When you have been saved for a while we will be able to recognize our triggers to sin. Refuse to listen to His lies. Any thought that tells you it is ok to sin did not come from God. The devil does not want us seeking the will of God. We forget we are in a spiritual war until something bad happens. There is a promise he will flee when you resist.

C. Draw nigh to God. That is really a promise. Prayer, fasting, reading the Bible, listening to sermons, studying and memorizing the Bible will all bring you closer to the Lord. When Satan attacks or when you

are struggling with desires of the flesh run to God. Sometimes God may use other believers to help you. When you seek their help you help them.

D. Keep short accounts with God. Seek forgiveness when you sin. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. To be double minded is to allow certain sins in your lives. The idea is don't try to fit in with people in the world by practicing their sin.. When we commit sin and mourn and weep we confess that sin and allow Jesus to forgive us and purify our hearts.

4. Strive to win an incorruptible crown. **1 Corinthians 9:24-27** Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. Notice there is a prize. The prize is to win the race. Paul says the one running is seeking an incorruptible crown which is a lasting crown. Paul says in **Philippians 3:14** I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. **Colossians 1:27-29** To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. What we need to do is to allow the Christ in me to produce the mind of Christ in me. Two key words are labor and striving. Both passages mention striving. In Corinthians Paul is striving for mastery of the process and in Colossians the believer is striving to be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Philippians uses the word press meaning give your all to mature in the faith.

5. Determine to finish well. Paul says he keeps his body and I believe he means his mind under control. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. Paul does not want to lose his reward but even more important to him is he never wanted his life to bring a reproach to the name of Christ. Paul walked the walk and did not just talk the talk.