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# Finishing Well

## Part 3 – Spiritual Disciplines

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If finishing well involves both persevering to the end and maintaining intimacy with Jesus, then how do we actually accomplish those things?

When considering the subject of spiritual formation and growth it is easy to slip into one of two extremes regarding the Christian life.

- + The first extreme overemphasises our role and minimises God's role.
- + The second extreme overemphasises God's role and minimises our role.

The biblical balance is that the spiritual life is both human and divine (Philippians 2:12-13).

### Bringing Order Into My Spiritual Life

- + God wants us to depend upon the Holy Spirit in order to finish well. (See - John 15:4-5; Ephesians 1:18-19; Ephesians 3:16; Galatians 5:16, 25)
- + God wants us to discipline our lives to promote our spiritual growth and finish well (1 Timothy 4:7; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Timothy 2:3-6).

Four reasons why our spiritual growth and development is dependent upon our disciplining of our lives:

1. Spirituality is not instantaneous or haphazard.
2. Our spiritual life is growing as we discipline ourselves in the faith.
3. Spiritual maturity is characterised by the ability to recognise and apply the principles of Scripture to daily experience (Hebrews 5:11-14).
4. The Bible comes alive when its lessons are put into practice.

## **Why We Need the Disciplines**

- + The Spiritual Disciplines Are A Crucial Means to our Pursuit of God.
- + Spiritual Disciplines Help Us Overcome.
- + The Disciplines Are A Powerful Means Toward Knowing, Loving, and Trusting God.
- + Jesus Used these Disciplines in His Spiritual Life.

## **Why We Find It Hard To Practice the Disciplines**

- + Most People Want Shortcuts to Spiritual Formation.

- + We Fool Ourselves Into Thinking That We Can Be Like Christ Without Imitating His Spirituality.
- + We Are Unwilling to Change A Comfortable Lifestyle.
- + We Are Afraid of Legalism.

### **Some Benefits of Practising the Spiritual Disciplines:**

- + They encourage us to imitate Christ.
- + They help us in the warfare fronts of the world, the flesh, and the demonic.
- + They give us perspective by encouraging us to embrace God's purpose for our lives.
- + They encourage us to be dominated more by the things above than the things below.
- + They remind us daily that the spiritual life is a balance between radical dependence and responsible action; that both are required for spiritual maturity.
- + They replace habits of sin by cultivating habits such as integrity, faithfulness, and compassion that lead to character.
- + They increase our willingness pay the price of discipleship and remind us that whatever comes quickly and cheaply is superficial, while the insights that we learn from struggle will endure.

## **A Daily Time of Focused Communion with God**

A daily time of focused personal communion with God is essential to finishing well. If we do not practice this daily focused time of communion with God, we will find ourselves drifting in the wrong direction.

Spiritual disciplines are not ends in themselves, but means to the end of intimacy with Christ and spiritual formation that enables us to finish well. When left to itself, however, any one of these disciplines tends to decline and decay. An infusion of directed intentionality and effort is necessary to sustain order and growth and to bring repeated times of personal renewal.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How do you respond to the idea of spiritual disciplines?
2. How do you balance the issues of dependence and discipline?
3. Which of the spiritual disciplines have helped you the most? Why?
4. Have you ever tried being alone with God for a day? Why? Why not?
5. What shortcuts to spiritual growth have you been trying lately?
6. Can you honestly say that you have experienced the “Abba – Father” relationship spoken of in Mark 14:36, Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6?
7. How do the disciplines relate to training ourselves in godliness? (See 1 Timothy 4:8-10; 2 Timothy 3:16)
8. How can you sustain the disciplines without failing into the trap of externalism?