



Part 3 | Private Disciplines

Discipline. Most people think of that word in a negative sense. To be disciplined means to be punished. Or "to be disciplined" could be something positive. For example, some people are self disciplined to exercise every day. Others are disciplined to eat healthy. These choices, when made consistently, yield positive results. In the same way, there are some spiritual disciplines that we can exercise to have positive results in our relationship with Jesus. That's what we'll unpack in this session as we draw (in part) from Jesus' teaching from the Sermon on the Mount.

Bottom Line: Practicing private (spiritual) disciplines helps me to experience God in personal ways.

Discussion Questions

Begin by reading Matthew 6:1-6

1. When it comes to discipline, where do you struggle most?
2. Is there something you currently enjoy doing that began as a discipline? If so, what made the discipline become enjoyable?
3. Can you think of disciplines you've developed that have strengthened your relationships with those you care about most? For example, calling your parents on a regular basis; coming home at a predetermined time; picking up after yourself; drinking less or not at all?
4. Growing up, were you encouraged to develop habits that could be described as private spiritual disciplines? Things like prayer, devotions, giving, fasting, confession? Which, if any, have become habits that you have carried with you into adulthood?
5. Were you raised in a home where generosity was practiced and talked about? Were you raised to give? Was the giving in your home more needs/crisis based or did your family support your church or other organizations on a regular, systematic basis?

6. How easy is it for you to be generous when confronted with a specific need? Why?
7. Is giving 10% of your income (tithing) to your church a new idea to you? How have you struggled with this in the past? How has the discipline of giving to your church strengthened your faith and walk with God?
8. Jesus promises that those who give according to his instruction will be rewarded. Do you feel you've been rewarded for your generosity in the past? If so, how?
9. Why do you think Jesus instructs us to pray privately on a regular basis?
10. We all pray in times of crisis. Do you think our crisis prayers would be different if we practiced the discipline of private daily prayer? If so, how?
11. Once again Jesus promises a reward, this time to those who pray privately. In your opinion, how are those who pray in private rewarded?
12. How has the "Your Time With God" section in this guide been helpful to you in the discipline of prayer?
13. What has been the most helpful or encouraging thought/idea from the message this week? How has that thought/idea helped you?

Action Steps from the Message This Week

1. Giving Action Steps:

- a. You are invited to set up your online giving at this web address:
PushPay.com/g/JourneyRVA
- b. If you missed it, you can watch the [ABC's To Financial Freedom Series online](#). Call the church office (763-0231) to receive your FREE copy of Barry Cameron's book with the same title.

2. Prayer Action Steps:

- a. Download Discussion Guide from [Week 1 \(Big Faith\)](#) and read the article, "How to Spend Meaningful Time with God."
- b. Carve out 5 - 15 minutes three times this week to pray. Feel free to use A.C.T.R. to guide your prayer time (Admiration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Requests).

3. Bible Intact Action Steps:

- a. Download Discussion Guide from [Week 1 \(Big Faith\)](#) and read the article, "How To Read The Story."
- b. Go to Bible.com/app and download the "You Version" Bible app to your phone.
- c. Each day this week, use the "Your Time With God" section below to guide your Scripture reading.

Other Resources:

[*Celebration of Discipline*](#), by Richard Foster

[*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*](#), by Donald Whitney

Your Time with God

Week 3 - Day 1

Matthew 6:1-4, 24; Luke 12:15

In this passage Jesus challenges his audience to engage in the discipline of giving. Jesus assumes generosity. Notice he says “when” not “if” you give. Our attitude towards generosity, and money in general, is usually a reflection of the way we were raised. But Jesus promises that those who give according to his instruction will be rewarded.

Prayer: Father, show me what I should do to honor you in my giving.

Week 3 - Day 2

Matthew 6:5-6

Jesus challenges us to another discipline: prayer. And again he says “when”, not “if” you pray. He assumes that we will. At the set time of prayer, pious Jews would stop what they were doing and pray, some discreetly, but others with pretentious display. Jesus did not condemn all public prayer, as there were times he prayed in public. One’s internal motivation is the central concern. Though public prayer has value, prayer completely away from public view allows a person (or group) to focus more exclusively on God.

Prayer: Father, how can I be more disciplined in my prayer life?

Week 3 - Day 3

Matthew 6:5-8; Mark 1:35

In Mark 1:35, we see four verbs (rising/departed/went/prayed) used to emphasize Jesus’ resolve to have fellowship with his Father. Fellowship with the Father is what prayer gives us as his children. And Jesus prayed at a very early hour, “while it was still dark.” Are we determined to spend time with our heavenly Father? Is it the priority of our day? Our faith grows when we resolve to be disciplined to spend time with him every day in prayer. Today, spend a few minutes working through the A.C.T.R. prayer acrostic from the message (Admiration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Requests).

Prayer: Father, where and when do You want me to spend time with You in prayer?

Week 3 - Day 4

Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Corinthians 10:11

It is a marvel how the Bible applies to us personally. The words pointedly address the concerns of long-ago people in faraway places, facing specific problems, many of which no longer exist. They had no difficulty seeing the application. Much of what they read was personal application to actual situations they were facing. But nothing in the Bible was

written directly to us or specifically about what we face. Yet the Bible repeatedly affirms that these words are also written for us: “Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction.” Application today discovers ways in which the Spirit reapplies Scripture in a timely fashion.

Prayer: Father, thank you for the timelessness of your word.

Week 3 - Day 5

Psalm 103

God is active everywhere in the world today, and we experience his power wherever we trust him and do his will. But we will go astray if we make this daily experience of God the basis of our relationship with him. We know God for who he is, and meet him as he is, when we meet him through his Word—the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation, God’s words and God’s deeds reveal God himself for our knowledge and our enjoyment. Spending time in his word gives us an accurate picture of who he really is. And the more accurate our picture of God, the greater our faith will grow.

Prayer: Father, how can I make studying your word a discipline of my life?