

How We Grow: Implementing the Spiritual Disciplines

Week 7 - Study

April 28, 2024

Additional Teaching Notes

The purpose of the Spiritual Disciplines is the total transformation of the person. They aim at replacing old destructive habits of thought with new life-giving habits. Nowhere is this purpose more clearly seen than in the Discipline of study.

We are transformed through the renewal of our minds (Romans 12:2). Paul suggests a number of things to think about in Philippians 4:8. Jesus said that the knowledge of the truth would set us free (John 8:32) No factor is more influential in shaping a person's moral and social behavior than regular Bible reading.

What is Study?

Study is a specific kind of experience in which through careful attention to reality the mind is enabled to move in a certain direction. The Old Testament instructs the Israelites to write the Laws on gates and doorposts and bind them to their wrists (Deut. 11:18). The purpose of this is to direct the mind repeatedly toward certain modes of thought about God and human relationships. The NT replaces the law on the doorpost with laws written on the heart that lead us to Jesus.

Study is different from meditation. Meditation is devotional; study is analytical. Meditation will relish a word; study will explicate it. The principle task of study is a perception into the reality of a given situation, encounter, book, etc. We can go through a major crisis, for example, without any perception of the real nature of the tragic situation. But if we carefully observe and reflect upon what occurred, we can learn a great deal.

Four Practical Suggestions for Consistent Success in Bible Study:

Find the Time! An audio recorded reading of the Bible can be done in 71-75 hours. The average person in the US watches that much television in less than two weeks. Reading 15 minutes a day can take you through the Bible in less than a year. Five minutes a day take you through the Bible in less than three years.

Find a Bible Reading Plan. One plan is to read three chapters every day and five on Sundays and you will go through the Bible in a year. Find at least one word, phrase, or verse to meditate on each time you read.

Write. Observations about the text, record questions, look up cross references, use a concordance, Outline the chapter.

Use the Tools such as a Bible Dictionary, Concordances, Commentaries, Bible Word Studies, Bible Atlas.

Another tool to utilize for study is memorization.

It supplies spiritual power. When Scripture is stored in the mind, it is available for the Holy Spirit to take and bring to your attention when you need it the most. (Psalm 119:11 "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.")

It strengthens your faith. Proverbs 22:17-19 "Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips. So that your trust may be in the LORD, I teach you today, even you."

It equips you for unexpected witnessing opportunities. You need that information available.

It prepares you to hear God's Guidance. (Psalm 119:24 "Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.")

It stimulates meditation. When you have the Word in your mind you can meditate on it anywhere at any time when opportunities come available. (Psalm 119:97 "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.")

Keys to Memorization:

Have a plan. Decide on a topic or verses that help with a habit you want to kick.

Write out the verses. First on paper, then on cards ... put them on your screen saver.

Draw picture reminders.

Memorize the verses word-perfectly. Don't be satisfied with almost!

Find a method of accountability – meet with someone regularly to review the verses.

Review and meditate every day.

Remember that the goal of memorization is not to meet a quota, the goal is Godliness.

Conclusion

The first and most important book we are to read is the Bible. Start small and build up.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17 "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Psalm 119:9, 11 "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. ... I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

Robert Sumner, in his book *The Wonder of the Word of God*, tells of a man in Kansas City who was severely injured in an explosion. His face was badly disfigured, and he lost his eyesight as well as both hands. He had just become a Christian when the accident happened, and one of his great disappointments was that he could no longer read the Bible. Then he heard about a lady in England who read Braille with her lips. He sent for some books of the Bible in Braille, but the nerve endings in his lips had been too badly damaged to distinguish the characters. One day as he brought a Braille page to his lips his tongue happened to touch a few of the raised characters and he could feel them. At the time Robert Sumner wrote his book, the man had read through the entire Bible four times. If he can do that, can we discipline ourselves to read the Bible?