

Spiritual Disciplines Tools

Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

We talk a lot about the joy of having a “personal relationship with Jesus”, but how is a person supposed to actually have a relationship with someone they cannot see? When we are told that it will involve “spiritual discipline”, the reaction inside of us is usually not an appealing one. Besides, aren’t activities such as extended times of prayer, fasting and meditation only for pastors and other spiritual leaders? What is the “regular Christian” supposed to do in order to get to know Jesus better?

The challenge of growing in our relationship with Jesus is of central importance, and it is a very real challenge for all, including spiritual leaders. Just like with any relationship that is really important to us, we need to put our time and energy into growing closer to Jesus – it does not happen automatically. However, there are two ditches to avoid as we travel this path. The first ditch is complacency or disinterest in pursuing a deeper relationship with Him, and this requires that we “discipline” ourselves to spend time with him and develop habits to enable this to happen. The second ditch is doing religious actions without desiring to come closer to God. Lance Witt describes the real purpose of the spiritual disciplines:

“Spiritual habits, also called ‘spiritual disciplines’, are an invitation to enjoy God and the Christian life. The disciplines will become the means to an intimate relationship with your father. However, prayer, time in Scripture, and even fasting can be done mechanically and routinely, without heart. Don’t settle for reducing the Christian life to going through religious motions.”

Choose one or more of the following tools and go through them with 2 friends, discussing together what you have learned on your own. The quote above is from the “Introduction” tool, which is recommended as a good starting point.

Level 1

Option 1

Read through the “Spiritual Habits” document and respond to the questions within, sharing what you learned about yourself with your group, especially what your next action steps will be.

<http://www.cschurch.ca/mediafiles/toolboxspiritualhabits.pdf>

Option 2

Ask 2-3 friends to commit to going through Discovering Soul Care by Mindy Caliguire together. There are 4 sections to the book. Read through 1 section on your own (takes about 10 minutes 3-4 times a week), and meet once a week to

go through the Group Discussion at the end of the section. On the fourth week, evaluate what you learned and decide on your next step of growth together.

Level 2

Option 1

Ask several others or your small group to go through The Life You've Always Wanted by John Ortberg (6 sessions of DVD small group material).

Option 2

Ask several others or your small group to go through The Life You've Always Wanted by John Ortberg (book study – 13 chapters with study guide).

Level 3

Ask 2-3 friends to commit to reading through Chapters 1-3 of Seeking the Face of God by Gary Thomas. Read a chapter at a time on your own and then meet to share together what you learned and how you will change the way you spend time with God.

Going Deeper Resources

Spiritual Disciplines Companion: Bible Studies and Practices to Transform Your Soul by Jan Johnson

Spiritual Disciplines Handbook by Adele Calhoun

Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster

The Spirit of the Disciplines by Dallas Willard