

Christian Spiritual Disciplines



“We don’t drift in good directions. We discipline and prioritize ourselves there.”

Andy Stanley, The Principle of Path: How to Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be



The Foundations of Spiritual Disciplines

1. God's Will and the Spiritual Disciplines

- a. For every person who claims to be a Follower of Jesus, there is one primary will that God has for each and every one of us. It can be found in Romans 8:29

For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.
(Romans 8:29 NLT)

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1. God's Will and the Spiritual Disciplines
 - b. The “destination” towards which believers have been set in motion, is that we might be “*like his Son.*”
 - c. Hence the importance of growing in our Christlikeness through spiritual disciplines
 - d. The common biblical term for someone who is a Follower of Jesus is *disciple*. The following is a definition helpful to our understanding of how the spiritual disciplines shape our lives

The process of being conformed to the
image of Christ for the sake of others

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2. The Problem with Teaching the Spiritual Disciplines
 - a. We all grow in our faith differently and through different media and methods
 - b. We are not all meant to be *clones* of one another
 - c. This is the most difficult commission for the church – who is tasked with the responsibility of making disciples – because it cannot implement a one-size fits all process for growing people consistently

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2. The Problem with Teaching the Spiritual Disciplines

d. The best it can do is...

- i. Create environments for growth,
- ii. Develop easy onramps for serving,
- iii. Be open to initiating new and dynamic ways for growing people
- iv. Create a culture that encourages accountability for spiritual growth

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3. The Inherent Minefields

- a. Narcissism
- b. Guilt
- c. Pride – Gift Projection/Expectation

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4. The Various Sources for Spiritual Growth

- a. Scripture – Always our primary source
- b. Text that use Scripture or reflect on it – i.e. devotionals
- c. Resources from contemporary life – like music or art
- d. Fellow believers - Mentors
- e. Church leaders
- f. Small groups

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- 4. The Various Sources for Spiritual Growth
 - g. The way people share their testimonies
 - h. Contemporary and popular books
 - i. Spiritual classics from the past
 - j. Blogs and podcasts

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5. The Different Categories for Connecting with God
 - a. Naturalists draw near to God through nature
 - b. Sensates draw near to God through the senses and imagination
 - c. Traditionalists draw near to God through ritual and symbol
 - d. Ascetics draw near to God through solitude and simplicity
 - e. Activists draw near to God through social justice and change

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5. The Different Categories for Connecting with God
 - f. Caregivers draw near to God through caring and serving others
 - g. Enthusiasts draw near to God through celebration, praise, and mystery
 - h. Contemplatives draw near to God through devotion, prayer, and adoration
 - i. Intellectuals draw near to God through their minds

What is Biblical Wisdom

"Wisdom is the discipline of applying truth to one's life in the light of experience."

The central theological essence of biblical wisdom is
The Fear of the Lord

What is Biblical Wisdom

^{NIV} Job 28:28 And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord-- that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'"

^{NIV} Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

^{NIV} Proverbs 9:10-11 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. ¹¹
For through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life.

Hill and Walton expand upon the definition and explain it this way:

Perhaps we can best capture the biblical way of thinking about all this by thinking in terms of worldview integration. In the ancient world, including Israel, *order* was an important value. Creation brought order to the cosmos; law brought order to society; etiquette brought order to human relationships; politics brought order to governance and authority. Ancient wisdom can then be understood as the pursuit of understanding and preserving order in the world.... In Israel, people saw the fear of the Lord as the key to this integration process. Order in the cosmos could only be understood through acknowledgment of the one who brought order. Order could only be preserved in society and in life by understanding God's requirements and expectations.

To say that wisdom is rooted in "the fear of the Lord" is to acknowledge the following truths

- a. Wisdom begins with the recognition of who God is.
- b. God is the source of all wisdom, and wisdom begins by properly aligning ourselves with who he is.
- c. Proper recognition results in reverence (i.e. the fear of the Lord).
- d. The practical side of reverence is submission.

The theological notion of the wisdom literature is also rooted in the concept of humility.

^{NIV} Proverbs 11:2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace,
but with humility comes wisdom.

^{NIV} Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty
spirit before a fall.

Summary

1. One of the great barriers to wisdom is pride, especially in an increased age of narcissism.
2. The fear of the Lord in biblical literature becomes the antidote for idolatry.
3. Engaging in the spiritual disciplines fosters a life oriented towards wisdom.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

Romans 8:5-6

Disposition determines direction
and
Direction determines destination