

A  
SHORT  
GUIDE  
TO

# SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Discussion Guide



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## Discussion Guide

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### CHAPTER 1

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1. How do you see the promise of a good life in our culture today? Why is this not the goal for the Christian?
2. What picture of your future self do you have in mind?
3. How have you tried to change yourself (specifically spiritually) in the past? Did it work? Was it lasting?
4. Before reading this chapter, what would you have said the goal of the Christian life is? How do you respond to “the goal of the Christian life is not only sinning less”? What, according to the author, is a better aim?
5. We are all becoming like somebody. If you haven’t spent much time endeavoring to become more like Christ, who do you think you’re becoming more like?
6. In what areas of life do you put daily, sustained effort? Why? What changes would be required for you to put sustained, daily effort into your spiritual growth?
7. What do you say you are living for? What does your life point to as to what you are living for? Are the two the same?

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### CHAPTER 2

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1. We’re all walking down a path toward spiritual maturity, and the author makes the case that we encounter two kinds of obstacles as we journey down this path: obstacles in our belief about who God is and obstacles in our belief about who we are. Would you say you have more obstacles in the former or the latter category?
2. What are the various obstacles we encounter when it comes to our view on who God is? Outside of those explored in this chapter, have you experienced any other obstacles in your context? Which is most difficult for you to overcome?
3. Why is it so crucial for us to allow God to tell us who He is as seen in Scripture, instead of our culture, circumstances, or feelings telling us who He is?
4. What are the various obstacles we encounter when it comes to our view on who we are? Which one most resonated with you, and why?
5. How do you generally imagine God feeling about you? Why? Why is it so crucial for you to trust Scripture to define His posture toward you instead of your feelings or imagination?
6. Why is true growth in God contingent upon a right view of Him and a right view of self? How is growth inhibited when we get one of these wrong?
7. How does it change things to know that God deemed humanity “very good” before sin entered the picture? How does this give you hope for your growth journey?

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## CHAPTER 3

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1. The author made the case that, in previous centuries, the common outlook on life was that God's design governed humanity. Then history moved toward a more self-focused authority. In what ways do you see this playing out in our culture? In what ways do you see it playing out in your daily life?
2. Do you consider yourself a disciplined person? Why or why not?
3. Before reading this book, what was your opinion on intentional, repeated habits? Has your perspective changed? How so?
4. What are some ways you actively avoid developing certain character traits? Why do you think you do this?
5. Read the text by Jonathan Edwards on the following pages. How does this point you to the who of our faith? How does it reveal the beauty of God?
6. Like a gardener tending to the tree of our life, we do all we can to cultivate a life that flourishes as the Spirit of God works the growth. How would you describe your spiritual life today? Is it flourishing? Does it need tending?
7. When you envision a future version of yourself, spiritually speaking, what do you see? What changes do you need to make today to shape this picture of tomorrow?

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## CHAPTER 4

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1. How do you find your attention drawn to the digital world? In what environments are you most tempted to engage it as a distraction or escape?
2. When you reach for technology, what are you hoping it will relieve you of? Boredom? Discomfort? Silence? Sadness? Anger? Why do you think tech is a better rescuer from these things than God is?
3. What impact on your presence to God, yourself, and others do your devices have in daily life? Which people are most harmed by your lack of presence and attention?
4. Do you think the digital world can be treated as a tool for your growth? Why or why not?
5. When will you plan to fast from engaging in digital spaces? What preemptive ways will you plan to protect your vulnerabilities?
6. The author makes the case that since we are clearly digitally expectant, we should be spiritually expectant. Along with his suggestions for this, what other ways could you foster spiritual expectancy?
7. As you break the fast, what compulsions have you identified? What do they tell you?

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## CHAPTER 5

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1. The author makes the case that your attention and your heart are connected. How have you found this to be true?
2. One way to transform your heart is through reading God's Word and God's family. When it comes to your Bible reading time, what does this discipline currently look like in your daily life? How would you like to see it change in the following weeks and months? When it comes to reading God's family, how might this practice transform your heart and attention span?
3. Why must we commit to learning? In what ways does the life of the mind affect the depth of our heart?
4. Summarize what it means to rehearse reality. How do you see your local church doing this? In what ways might you grow in this discipline?
5. Why is being part of a physically gathered community so important (whether that's the church or other gathered experiences)? If you feel internal resistance toward offering your physical presence in church (or in other areas of life), explore that. Why do you think you feel this way?
6. How might you seek to be more present with others? Consider ways you might be present for those who might be sick or elderly and who don't have anyone else. Also consider opportunities like dinner parties, coffee dates, and other normal, everyday interactions.
7. What would your five-sentence testimony be? Remember, the goal is presence and right action that flows from a right heart, not simply the right words. You can't save anyone, but the One you serve can!

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## CHAPTER 6

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1. Do you feel like you're living life in a hurry? Where do you think that comes from?
2. Why is it nearly impossible to grow in our spiritual lives if we don't have the ability to listen?
3. What helps you sit still? What obstacles prevent you from sitting still? What steps could you take to minimize the obstacles?
4. What does it look like practically to listen to God? Consider scheduling time to listen in prayer instead of launching into a list of requests or needs, asking God what He wants you to hear and being silent before Him.
5. What keeps you from holding space for others? How might you pursue emotional health and maturity for yourself so that you may be able to sit with others in their pain? Note: The underlying discipline here is to care for others like you would hope they care for you. This takes practice, self-denial, and a listening heart.
6. What could living simply look like for you? In what areas of life do you need to work to create margin, whether that be in mental, spiritual, or financial spheres? Where do you need to do less?
7. Consider the last few chapters on attention. What practices might you begin today to develop more discipline around your incredibly valuable attention? Consider going for a walk without an intention of tracking steps or a checklist of items to mentally work through. Between meetings or locations, take a few moments to slow down and spend time praying

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## CHAPTER 7

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1. What has processing your emotions looked like for you in the past? What from this chapter has helped you better process your emotions?
2. In what ways does processing our emotions make us healthier, more mature Christians? In what ways does ignoring our emotions hold us back from Christian maturity?
3. Describe a time when you had an emotional response to a situation in your life. How did your body react? Use the Feelings Wheel on page 112 to further describe this moment.
4. As you process your emotions, what tends to be most difficult—expressing, naming, or discussing them with others? How might you seek to grow in this area?
5. The author recommended scheduling four blocks of time throughout your day for reflection and processing. How might this practice shift your overall view of God’s presence in your life?
6. Practice sharing your story and asking others to share theirs. How do you see God at work?
7. Do you have a conversation partner who invites you to confess your sin and walk in the light? If not, how can you start pursuing a relationship like this in the next week?

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## CHAPTER 8

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1. What emotions do you feel most comfortable expressing to God? Think through the vocabulary you use often with Him. What words often come out when you seek Him in prayer? (For example, words like overwhelmed, frustrated, sad, upset, confused, etc.)
2. What emotions do you have the hardest time expressing? Which ones do you hold back or perhaps try to cloak in better language to seem stronger?
3. In what ways have you avoided the practice of lament? In what ways have you avoided the practice of celebration? Why?
4. What does it mean to “pray the psalms”? Have you ever tried this? What about praying the psalms seems comforting to you? Challenging to you?
5. Practice praying a psalm. How does this psalm give voice to your emotions?
6. What does it look like to cultivate celebration in your daily life? How can you look for grace and actively notice God’s provision each day? Consider what it might look like to celebrate important milestones with those around you, how you might name and celebrate God’s good gifts, and how you might record these moments, whether in a file or journal or through photos.
7. Both the Lord’s Supper and meals together with other believers model what is to come. Is there space in your current weekly schedule for you to eat a meal with others often, seeking intentional conversation about what God is doing? If not, how might you make space?

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## CHAPTER 9

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1. What limits in your life are especially frustrating for you? Why do you think these are the ones that rise to the top of the list for you?
2. What is wisdom? How do you get it?
3. In what ways do you deny your limitedness and seek to press beyond it? How does that normally go? When tempted in this way, how might you fight back with what you know now?
4. What Sabbath rhythms are in place in your life? How do you normally spend this time? What adjustments should be made so that you are actively resting and remembering God's goodness and provision during this time?
5. In what ways do you avoid the present? When you are mentally or emotionally detached from "right now," do you tend to focus more on the past or the future? Why?
6. What are some practices you can put in place to better embrace your creaturehood and focus on the present?
7. Return to the list of Borgmann's affirmations on page 157. Which of these four do you struggle with the most? How can you remember these truths?

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## CHAPTER 10

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1. How might you wisely think on death often? What might need to change in your life to leave nothing unsaid or undone?
2. ~~When you hear of the death of another, how do you pause to consider their life? How does this bring sobriety for how you are handling the gift of today?~~
3. How could you begin to "keep a calendar" of important dates for those you love? Develop a rhythm of recording these dates or setting reminders and sending a card or calling on those important days when they may feel most alone.
4. How can you be present with someone in their mourning? Consider showing up for a friend's surgery, or when they're in the hospital or in need of company. Consider how life goes on for those in grief and how you might encourage them as they develop a new normal. Give them the gift of presence.

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## CHAPTER 11

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1. What typically holds you back from doing life together with those God has granted you a connection with?
2. In what ways do you see yourself prioritizing "who's next?" instead of "who's here?" How does this posture toward those in front of you offend God?
3. In what ways does the discipline of life together acknowledge your limits?
4. How might you begin practicing the discipline of life together? What steps do you need to take?

