

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

The Benefit of Spiritual Disciplines // 1 Timothy 4:1-10

THE POINT: Growth in Christ occurs when we practice spiritual disciplines.

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

We have good habits, maybe a few bad habits, and perhaps a couple of unusual habits. We might debate whether certain habits are good or bad, but there are some things we can do that are definitely good for us. Anything we do that helps us grow in our walk with Christ is definitely good, and we would benefit from learning to do these regularly and faithfully.

► **Do you have an unusual habit?**

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-3

Many are led astray by people who offer a counterfeit spirituality. These false teachers are hypocrites who willfully deceive by distorting the things of God. Paul gave two examples.

► **Marriage:** Paul wrote that these deceivers “forbid marriage.” As the apostle wrote this letter to Timothy, the pastor of the church in Ephesus, the church was under attack from legalistic false teachers who prohibited people from getting married.

► **Food:** The deceivers also will demand that people abstain from eating certain foods that God created for them to eat. The hypocrites and deceivers Paul described were not promoting moderation, balance, or making healthy choices. They were deceitfully teaching the people to refuse good gifts from God. Marriage and food are wonderful gifts God created for us, which we should receive with gratitude. To accept the distorted teachings of deceivers is to reject God as Provider.

► **What are some examples of good things that have been distorted by our culture?**

► **What steps can we take to be able to identify false teaching when we hear it?**

1 TIMOTHY 4:4-7a

Instead of rejecting the good things God has given to us, we are to receive God’s good gifts with wholehearted gratitude. After all, every good thing comes from His hand. The gift reflects the giver. This means that the gifts we receive from God are holy. They are to be received prayerfully and used in ways that bring honor to Him. When we use the good things God has given us in ways they weren’t meant to be used, instead of thanks, this is an abuse of God’s kindness. Many of our culture’s perspectives aren’t in line with the Bible’s teachings. If we are to recognize truth from error, we must know what God has communicated in Scripture.

► **What things or ideas does our culture value that go against God’s truth?**

► **How has knowing the truth helped you avoid silly or misleading teaching in the past?**

1 TIMOTHY 4:7b-10

When we practice spiritual disciplines, we open ourselves up to God’s working in us so He can produce godliness in us. Believers, just like athletes, are to be strategic in practicing spiritual disciplines.

► **Bible Study:** helps us avoid silly myths and falling prey to false gospels.

► **Prayer and Meditation:** help increase intimacy with and dependence upon God.

► **Confession of Sin:** helps us remain humble and fosters our relationship with God.

► **Fellowship and Corporate Worship:** form connections with other believers, build up the church, and bring honor to God.

► **Service:** demonstrates love and meets needs in real ways.

► **Evangelism:** through sharing the gospel we fulfill our mission to reflect God’s character to the world.

► **What strategies have helped you stay committed to spiritual disciplines?**

► **What are some specific spiritual disciplines you will commit to?**



LIVE IT OUT

Unit 2 // Session 1

➤ CHRIST

- Godliness refers to living like Jesus. What five words would you use to describe the ways Jesus lived?

- Choose two of these ideas where you have room to grow. How will you commit to growing in these areas this week?

➤ COMMUNITY

We are called to devote ourselves to disciplines like studying Scripture, prayer, and stewardship. We are also called to disciplines that involve others, such as hospitality, serving others, and community.

- On a scale from 1 to 10, how well are you doing with disciplines that involve others? Which one stands out as an area that needs improvement in your life?

- How will you grow in practicing disciplines in order to bless others or to grow in your relationship with others?

➤ CULTURE

Most Christians are familiar with Jesus' call for us to share the gospel. However, far fewer understand that evangelism is a discipline we're called to regularly practice.

- How often do you share the gospel with lost friends?

- How many times per week do you think would be healthy for you? Commit to practicing evangelism in a disciplined way. If you need help knowing how to share the gospel, ask a leader or trusted friend.