

Disciplines For The Disciple



Spiritual Exercises Leading To Godliness

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To God Be The Glory!

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Disciplines For The Disciple

Table Of Contents

Introduction To Spiritual Discipline	3
The Discipline Of Prayer	5
The Discipline Of Meditation	7
The Discipline Of Fasting	10
The Discipline Of Singing	14
The Discipline Of Fellowship	17
The Discipline Of Giving	20
The Discipline Of Teaching	24

Disciplines For The Disciple

Introduction To Spiritual Discipline

INTRODUCTION

1. In **1 Ti 4:7**, we find Paul exhorting Timothy to...
 - a. “exercise yourself toward godliness” (NKJV)
 - b. What does this mean?
2. Compare other translations...
 - a. “train yourself for godliness” (ESV, NET)
 - b. “train yourself to be godly” (NIV, NLT)
 - c. “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” (NASB)
3. Consider what some commentators have written...
 - a. “cultivate piety, and seek to become more holy” - **Barnes**
 - b. “Timothy is told that as an athlete trains his body, so the Christian must train his soul.” - **Barclay**
 - c. “Such exercise involves reading and studying the Bible, prayer, meditation...” - **BBC**
4. The value of such spiritual exercise is seen in **1 Ti 4:8**...
 - a. “godliness is profitable for all things”
 - b. “having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come”

[The disciple, therefore, is to engage in various “exercises” or “disciplines” that cultivate godliness or piety. In this series, we shall take a look at such “**Disciplines For The Disciple.**” But in this lesson, some introductory thoughts regarding...]

I. THE CONCEPT OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

A. DEFINITION OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE...

1. In general terms, discipline means:
 - a. “any training intended to develop moral character, or produce a pattern of behavior.”
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discipline>
 - b. “training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character
- **Merriam-Webster**
 2. Regarding spiritual disciplines in particular:
 - a. “A spiritual discipline is, when practiced faithfully and regularly, a habit or regular pattern in your life that repeatedly brings you back to God and opens you up to what God is saying to you.” - <http://www.spirithome.com/spirdisc.html>
 - b. “Spiritual disciplines can be described as behaviors that facilitate spiritual growth.”
- <http://www.wcg.org/lit/spiritual/group/discip1.htm>
- **Spiritual disciplines, then, are spiritual exercises that one engages in habitually which bring one closer to God and thus become more godly in character and behavior**

B. EXAMPLES OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES...

1. **Prayer** - in which one spends time talking to God - e.g., **Dan 6:10; Co 4:2**
2. **Meditation** - in which one contemplates on God’s Word, or other things worthy of such

- attention - cf. **Psa 1:1-2; Ph 4:8**
3. **Fasting** - usually accompanied with prayer, in which one abstains from food - e.g., **Neh 1:4; Ac 13:2-3; 14:23**
 4. **Singing** - through which one can praise God and be edified - e.g., **Psa 71:23; Ac 16:25**
 5. **Giving** - by which we can please God and be blessed - cf. **He 13:16; Ac 20:35**
 6. **Assembling** - where we can exhort one another - cf. **Psa 122:1; He 10:24-25**
 7. **Hospitality** - showing kindness to strangers, which often results in a blessing - cf. **He 13:2**
 8. **Teaching** - which usually benefits the teacher more than the student - cf. **He 5:12-14**
- **Such spiritual activities help to discipline or train one to be more godly**

[We shall examine these more carefully in future lessons. But to appreciate the importance of spiritual disciplines for those who call themselves disciples of Christ, let's review...]

II. THE CONCEPT OF DISCIPLESHIP

A. THE WORD "DISCIPLE"...

1. Literally means a **learner**
 2. It denotes "one who follows another's teaching" - **Vine**
 3. A disciple was not only a learner, he was also an **adherent**
- **For such reasons, disciples were spoken of as imitators of their teachers**

B. THE GOAL IN BEING A DISCIPLE...

1. Stated by Jesus himself: to be like the teacher - **Lk 6:40**
 2. To be Christ's disciple, then, is to strive to be like Him!
 3. This coincides with God's goal in the redemption of mankind, that they be conformed to the image of His Son - **Ro 8:29**
- **Since Jesus is the Son of God, the goal of a disciple is to be more godly**

CONCLUSION

1. Are you a disciple of Christ...?
 - a. Jesus wants you to become His disciple - **Mt 28:19-20**
 - b. Jesus wants you to become like Him - **Lk 6:40**
2. With the aid of spiritual disciplines, we are more likely to become what Jesus wanted...
 - a. For Jesus Himself often taught His disciples to engage in such activities
 - b. Through both precept and example, Jesus taught His disciples regarding such activities

If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, then I trust that this series, "**Disciplines For The Disciple**" will be of special interest to you. Remember what Paul wrote to Timothy...

"But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance."

- 1 Ti 4:7-9

Disciplines For The Disciple

The Discipline Of Prayer

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous study we defined the spiritual disciplines as...
 - a. Spiritual exercises that one engages in habitually which bring one closer to God and thus become more godly in character and behavior
 - b. Spiritual activities such as prayer, meditation, fasting, singing, giving, etc.
2. Now we shall consider such disciplines more carefully, beginning with **prayer**..
 - a. An activity in which Jesus Himself frequently practiced - **Lk 5:16**
 - b. A spiritual exercise enjoined upon Christians - **Co 4:2; 1 Th 5:17**

[To encourage us to pray more often, let's first examine...]

I. THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER

A. AS TAUGHT BY JESUS...

1. To praise God, expressing adoration
 - a. As indicated by the phrase "Hallowed be Your name..." - **Mt 6:9**
 - b. As exemplified in one of David's prayer - **1 Chr 29:10-13**
 2. To pray that God's will to be done
 - a. As indicated by the phrase "Your kingdom come..." - **Mt 6:10**
 - b. As exemplified in the Lord's own prayer - **Mt 26:39,42**
 3. To make requests for our daily needs
 - a. Such as our daily food - **Mt 6:11**
 - b. Such as our bodily health - **3 Jn 2**
 4. To confess our sins, seeking mercy
 - a. Asking forgiveness, as we forgive others - **Mt 6:12**
 - b. Assured that God will justly and faithfully cleanse through Jesus' blood - **1 Jn 1:9**
 5. To ask for God's providential care
 - a. Keeping us away from evil - **Mt 6:13**
 - b. Directing our path if it be His will - **Ro 1:9-10**
- **From "The Lord's Prayer", we can learn much about the purpose of prayer**

B. AS TAUGHT BY HIS APOSTLES...

1. To express thanksgiving - **1 Th 5:17-18**
 2. To find peace in the midst of anxiety - **Ph 4:6-7**
 3. To receive strength and boldness from God - **Ep 3:14-16,20; 6:18-20**
 4. To find opportunity for service to God - **Co 4:3**
 5. To receive wisdom from God - **Ja 1:5-8**
 6. To intercede on behalf of others - **Ja 5:14-16; 1 Ti 2:1-2**
- **From the apostles' writings, we learn much about the purpose of prayer**

[There is much good that can come from prayer, both for ourselves and those for whom we pray. It is an activity in which Jesus and His apostles engaged in frequently, so now let's consider more closely...]

II. THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

A. AS TAUGHT BY JESUS...

1. Jesus taught the value of **secret prayer**
 - a. By precept, in His sermon on the mount - **Mt 6:5-6**
 - b. By example, in finding solitary places to pray - **Mk 1:35**
 2. Jesus taught the value of **simple prayer**
 - a. Many words are not necessary - **Mt 6:7**
 - b. Our Father already knows our needs - **Mt 6:8**; cf. **Ro 8:26-27**
 3. Jesus taught the value of **steadfast prayer**
 - a. In response to His disciples' request to teach them to pray - **Lk 11:1,5-10**
 - b. In telling them the parable of the persistent widow - **Lk 18:1-8**
- **Thus the discipline of prayer should include the elements of secrecy, simplicity, and steadfastness**

B. AS PRACTICED BY GODLY MEN AND WOMEN...

1. David, a man after God's own heart, prayed morning, noon, and evening - **Psa 55:17**
 2. Daniel, a man greatly beloved by God, prayed thrice daily for many years - **Dan 6:10**
 3. Anna, a prophetess, served God in prayers night and day - **Lk 2:36-37**
 4. Real widows continue in prayers night and day - **1 Ti 5:5**
 5. Epaphras labored fervently in prayers for those in his church - **Co 4:12**
 6. Paul prayed frequently for his brethren in other churches - **Ro 1:9**; **Ph 1:3-4**; **Ep 1:15-16**; **1 Th 1:2**
- **Clearly the discipline of prayer involves a habitual, daily practice of prayer**

CONCLUSION

1. The discipline of prayer, done habitually, is truly a spiritual exercise...
 - a. "Prayer is the spiritual gymnasium in which we exercise and practice godliness." - **V. L. Crawford**
 - b. "...Prayer is educative. The man who prays grows; and the muscles of the soul swell from this whipcord to iron bands." - **Frederick B. Meyer**
 - c. The opposite is also true: "Seven days without prayer makes one weak." - **Allan E. Bartlette**
2. The discipline of prayer is truly an exercise that leads to godliness...
 - a. For Jesus, at the right hand of God, makes intercession for us - **Ro 8:34**
 - b. Indeed, Jesus always lives to make intercession - **He 7:25**

If we desire to be true disciples of Christ, if we want to become more like Him, then "**The Discipline Of Prayer**" is a spiritual exercise that we must engage in frequently...

And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. - Mt 14:23

Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. - Mk 1:35

So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed. - Lk 5:16

Disciplines For The Disciple

The Discipline Of Meditation

INTRODUCTION

1. In this series we have defined spiritual disciplines as...
 - a. Spiritual exercises that bring one closer to God, to become more godly in character and behavior
 - b. Spiritual activities such as prayer, meditation, fasting, singing, giving, etc.
2. Our previous study examined the discipline of prayer...
 - a. Noting especially the value of secret, simple, and steadfast prayer
 - b. In which we praise God, make supplication for our needs, intercede for others
3. Closely tied to prayer is the disciple of **meditation**...
 - a. A spiritual exercise practiced by men of God - **Gen 24:63; Psa 1:1-2**
 - b. A spiritual duty given to those who are Christians - **Ph 4:8; 1 Ti 4:15**
4. But some questions may come to mind...
 - a. **What** exactly is meditation?
 - b. **Why** should we take time to meditate?
 - c. **How** should we meditate?

[This study will attempt to provide answers to these questions...]

I. MEDITATION IN THE BIBLE

A. WHAT IS NOT MEDITATION IN THE BIBLE...

1. That practiced by many **Eastern religions**
 - a. Like Hinduism, Buddhism, or Transcendental Meditation
 - b. Where the object is to experience truth, peace, or being, usually inexpressible
2. That practiced by **Christian mystics**
 - a. Such as Quakers, and others often found among Catholics and Protestants
 - b. Who meditate to experience God, or to receive some revelation from God
3. Both Eastern and Christian mystical meditation usually seek to empty the mind so as to find or receive truth within (i.e., **a subjective form of meditation**)

B. WHAT IS MEDITATION IN THE BIBLE...

1. To contemplate on truth or reality already revealed (i.e., **an objective form of meditation**)
2. For example, the man “after God’s own heart” is one who meditates on:
 - a. The Lord Himself - **Psa 63:6**
 - b. His wonderful Works - **Psa 77:12**
 - c. His revealed Word - **Psa 119:15,23,48,97-99,148**
3. In the words of Paul, we are to meditate on “**things**” - **Ph 4:8**
 - a. Things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report
 - b. Things that are of any virtue, and are praiseworthy

[There is a very real difference between Biblical meditation and that commonly practiced by many

religions: Christian meditation dwells on that already revealed in creation or inspired revelation, whereas other forms of meditation seek some new truth or experience to be revealed. Understanding the difference, why is Biblical meditation so important...?]

II. WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD MEDITATE

A. A SOURCE OF JOY AND STRENGTH...

1. As seen from such passages like **Psa 1:1-3; Isa 40:28-31**
2. This alone should motivate us to meditate more often

B. AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR TRANSFORMATION...

1. The goal of the Christian is to become more like Christ - cf. **Ro 8:29**
2. This requires a **“transformation”** - **Ro 12:1-2**
3. But notice that this is possible only by **“renewing the mind”** - **Ro 12:2**
4. This **“renewing”** is possible only when we **“set our minds”** on proper things
 - a. On things above
 - b. Not on things on the earth - **Co 3:1-2**
5. Only then, when our minds are **“set on things above”**, will we be successful in completing the **“transformation”** which includes **“putting off the old man”** and **“putting on the new man”** - cf. **Co 3:1-2** with **Co 3:5-14**

C. MANY FALL BECAUSE THEY MEDITATE ON THE WRONG THINGS...

1. They **“mind the things of the flesh”**, which leads to **“death”** and **“enmity with God”** - cf. **Ro 8:5-8**
2. You cannot be a spiritual person if you “dwell” on carnal things
 - a. “Recent studies conducted by a Stanford University research team have revealed that *‘what we watch’* does have an effect on our imaginations, our learning patterns, and our behaviors.” - **Denis Waitley, Seeds Of Greatness, p. 47-48**
 - b. “First we are exposed to new behaviors and characters. Next, we learn or acquire these new behaviors. The last and most crucial step is that we adopt these behaviors as our own.” - **ibid.**
 - c. “One of the most critical aspects of human development that we need to understand is the influence of *‘repeated viewing’* and *‘repeated verbalizing’* in shaping our future.” - **ibid.**
 - d. The information goes in, *‘harmlessly, almost unnoticed,’* on a daily basis, but we don’t react to it until later, when we aren’t able to realize the basis for our reactions.” - **ibid.**
 - e. “In other words, our value system is being formed without any conscious awareness on our part of what is happening!” - **ibid.**
 - f. “You are what you watch and think.” - **ibid., p. 45**
 - g. “If a sixty second commercial, by repeated viewing, can sell us a product, then isn’t it possible for a sixty minute soap opera or *‘smut-com’*, by repeated viewing, to sell us a lifestyle?” - **ibid., p. 47**
3. Fill your mind with positive and spiritual thoughts if you really want to:
 - a. “renew the mind”
 - b. “be transformed”

[If Christians are to succeed, they must set their minds (meditate) on the things of the Spirit, on things above, where Christ is! Only then will they with God’s help put off the old man and put on the new man. Finally, a few thoughts on...]

III. HOW TO MEDITATE

A. FIND A QUIET TIME AND PLACE...

1. For Isaac, it was in the field at evening - **Gen 24:63**
 2. For David, it was in bed during the night watches - **Psa 4:4; 63:6; 119:148**
- **A time and place free from distraction**

B. CONTEMPLATE SOMETHING OF VALUE...

1. David focused his meditation on three things:
 - a. The Lord Himself - **Psa 63:6**
 - b. His wonderful Works - **Psa 77:12**
 - c. His revealed Word - **Psa 119:15,23,48,97-99,148**
 2. Paul mentioned things that possess virtue and are praiseworthy - **Ph 4:8**
 - a. Whatever is noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report
 - b. Which could include devotional writings by uninspired authors
- **A subject or object worthy of mindful contemplation**

C. LET THE BIBLE BE YOUR PRIMARY FOCUS...

1. Read it **contemplatively** every day - **Psa 1:2; 119:15**
 2. Read it with a prayer in your heart - cf. **Psa 119:18**
 3. As you read, occasionally read it **aloud** to yourself
 - a. The Hebrew word in **Psa 1:2** for meditate means **“to mutter”**
 - b. Reading slowly and audibly helps to focus one’s mind on the words
 4. As you read, you might **ask yourself** the following questions:
 - a. Is there some truth I should know from this verse?
 - b. How does this passage affect a previously held conviction?
 - c. Is there something I should stop doing in light of this verse?
 - d. Is there a practice I should change?
 - e. Is there a habit I ought to begin?
 5. You might end with a prayer such as David’s - cf. **Psa 119:10**
- **“Hold the Word of God in your heart until it has affected every phase of your life...this is meditation.”**

CONCLUSION

1. In **Psa 19:14**, we find David praying:

*“Let the words of mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
“O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.”*

2. By heeding Paul’s command (“meditate on these things” - **Ph 4:8**), we can ensure that our meditations will be acceptable in the sight of our Lord!

Together with frequent **prayer**, the practice of **meditation** will go a long way toward exercising one’s self unto godliness...!

Disciplines For The Disciple

The Discipline Of Fasting

INTRODUCTION

1. For this series we have defined spiritual disciplines as...
 - a. Spiritual exercises that bring one closer to God, to become more godly in character and behavior
 - b. Spiritual activities such as prayer, meditation, fasting, singing, giving, etc.
2. Previous studies examined the disciplines of...
 - a. **Prayer** - especially the value of secret, simple, and steadfast prayer
 - b. **Meditation** - contemplating on God, His works, His words, and things worthy of virtue
3. A discipline closely tied to prayer in the Scriptures is that of **fasting**...
 - a. Practiced by men of God - **Ezr 8:21; Neh 1:4; Dan 9:3; Mt 4:2**
 - b. Observed by the early church - **Ac 13:1-3; 14:23; 2Co 6:5; 11:27**
4. But some questions may come to mind...
 - a. **What** exactly is fasting?
 - b. **Why** would Christians fast?
 - c. **When** would Christians fast?
 - d. **How** should Christians fast?

[A detailed study of fasting can be found at <http://executableoutlines.com/fa.htm>. This study will simply summarize the answers to such questions...]

I. FASTING IN THE BIBLE

A. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT...

1. Only one fast was commanded in the Law of Moses - **Lev 16:29; 23:27-29; Num 29:7**
 - a. The phrase “afflict your soul” refers to fasting - **cf. Psa 69:10**
 - b. Note also **Ac 27:9** (where the Fast refers to the Day of Atonement)
2. But the Israelites (and others) fasted on many other occasions
 - a. In war, or at the threat of it - **Judg 20:26; 1 Sam 7:6**
 - b. When loved ones were sick - **2 Sam 12:16-23; Psa 35:11-13**
 - c. When loved ones died - **1 Sam 31:13; 1 Chr 10:12; 2 Sam 1:12**
 - d. When they sought God’s forgiveness - **Jon 3:4-10; Dan 9:3-5; Neh 9:1-3**
 - e. When faced with impending danger - **2 Chr 20:3; Ezr 8:21; Neh 1:4; Est 4:3,16**
 - f. To commemorate certain calamities - **cf. Zec 7:3; 8:19**
3. **The purpose of fasting**
 - a. Some fasting was a natural reaction to grief over the loss of a loved one
 - b. More often, fasting was done purposely to “afflict the soul” - **Lev 23:27-29**
 - c. The purpose was to “humble” or “chasten” the soul - **Psa 35:13; 69:10**
 - d. By so humbling themselves, they hoped to incur God’s favor - **Ezr 8:21-23; cf. Isa 57:15; 66:1-2**
 - e. Because they sought God’s favor, fasting usually was accompanied with prayer
4. **The nature of fasting**

- a. Fasting generally involved abstaining from food but not water
 - b. Sometimes the fast was partial - a restriction of diet, not total abstention - cf. **Dan 10:2-3**
 - c. On rare occasions there was the absolute fast - **Jon 3:5-10; Est 4:16**; cf. **Ac 9:9**
 - d. The absolute fasts of Moses and Elijah must have been miraculous - **Deu 9:9; 1 Kin 19:8**
 - 5. **The length of fasting**
 - a. A fast was often for **one day**, from sunrise to sunset, and after sundown food would be taken - **Judg 20:26; 2 Sam 1:12; 3:35**
 - b. A fast might be for **one night** (hence the term, “breakfast”) - **Dan 6:18**
 - c. The fast of Esther continued for **three days, day and night**, which seems to have been a special case - **Est 4:16**
 - d. At Saul’s burial, the fast by Jabesh-Gilead was **seven days** - **1 Sam 31:13; 1 Chr 10:12**
 - e. David fasted **seven days** when his child was ill - **2 Sam 12:16-18**
 - f. The longest fasts were the **forty day fasts** by Moses, Elijah, and Jesus - **Exo 34:28; Deu 9:9; 1 Kin 19:8; Mt 4:2; Lk 4:2**
 - 6. **Warnings regarding fasting**
 - a. Fasting can easily turn into an external show and ceremonial ritualism
 - b. When it did, God and His prophets spoke out against it - **Isa 58:1-9; Zec 7:1-14**
- **Though subject to abuse, fasting played an important role in the life of Israel**

B. FASTING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT...

- 1. **In the life of Jesus**
 - a. He fasted forty days in the wilderness - **Mt 4:1-2; Lk 4:1-2**
 - b. He taught concerning fasting in His sermon on the mount - **Mt 6:16-18**
 - c. He implied His disciples would fast after His death - **Mk 2:18-20; Lk 5:33-35**
 - d. He spoke of the combined power of fasting and prayer - **Mt 17:14-21**
 - 2. **In the life of the early church**
 - a. Members of the church at Antioch served the Lord with fasting - **Ac 13:1-2**
 - b. Elders were appointed in the churches of Galatia with fasting - **Ac 14:21-23**
 - 3. **In the life of Paul**
 - a. He fasted prior to his baptism - **Ac 9:9**
 - b. He fasted as part of his ministry - **2Co 6:4-10; 11:23-28**
 - c. He described how fasting might be appropriate for others - **1 Co 7:5**
 - 4. **In the lives of others**
 - a. Anna - **Lk 2:36-37**
 - b. Cornelius - **Ac 10:30-31**
- **Through both precept and example, the New Testament has much to say about fasting**

[Both Jews and Gentiles, Christians and non-Christians, practiced the spiritual discipline of fasting in Bible times. Should Christians fast today? I believe there is a place for fasting today...]

II. WHY WOULD CHRISTIANS FAST?

A. PEOPLE FAST TODAY FOR VARIOUS REASONS...

- 1. Some purposefully, for health reasons
 - 2. Some without thinking, in times of grief and sorrow
 - 3. Others, in an effort to gain some kind of self-control
- **But these are not reasons Christian should fast in their service to God - Co 2:20-23**

B. CHRISTIANS SHOULD FAST TO SEEK GOD’S HELP...

1. This is consistent with the majority of fasting in the OT
 - a. In times of war or at the threat of it (Israel)
 - b. When loved ones were sick (David)
 - c. When seeking God's forgiveness (Ahab, Daniel)
 - d. When seeking God's protection (Ezra)
 2. This is consistent with the examples of fasting in the NT
 - a. When dealing with temptations (Jesus)
 - b. When serving the Lord (Antioch)
 - c. When beginning a work for the Lord (Antioch)
 - d. When selecting and appointing elders (Galatia)
- **There is certainly apostolic example for Christians to fast today**

[If fasting has a place in the Christian life, then let's look more closely at...]

III. WHEN WOULD CHRISTIANS FAST?

A. WHENEVER CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRE GOD'S HELP...

1. These may be occasions on an individual level
 - a. When faced with difficult temptations
 - b. When faced with the serious illness of a loved one
 2. These occasions might be on a congregational level
 - a. As when appointing elders
 - b. As when sending out missionaries
- **Not as some ceremonious ritual, but when appropriate for the occasion**

B. WHENEVER CIRCUMSTANCES CALL FOR MUCH PRAYER...

1. Is not God more likely to answer our prayers if we are persistent? - cf. **Lk 18:1-8**
 2. Is not God more likely to respond if we fast in the proper manner? - cf. **Mt 6:17-18**
- **This may be why fasting is frequently joined with prayer in the Scriptures**

[Whenever there are matters requiring much prayer, fasting along with prayer is appropriate. Finally, let's take a look at...]

IV. HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS FAST?

A. SOME BIBLICAL WARNINGS...

1. Not to be seen of men - **Mt 6:16-18**
 2. Not as some regular ritual - cf. **Mt 9:14-17**
 3. Not without true repentance - cf. **Isa 58:3-9**
- **To be effective, fasting must take such warnings seriously**

B. SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS...

1. Don't fast just because it sounds like a neat thing to do
 - a. Take the subject seriously
 - b. Fast only when the occasion is a serious one
 - c. One in which you deeply desire God's help
2. If you have never fasted before...
 - a. Start slow, fasting only for brief periods of time
 - b. End slow, gradually breaking your fast with fresh fruits and vegetables in small amounts

3. Fast when you have time to spend in prayerful meditation
 - a. Remember the purpose for fasting
 - 1) To humble oneself in God's sight
 - 2) To seek favorable answer to prayer for some important plea
 - b. Thus fast when you have time
 - 1) To pray
 - 2) To meditate
 - c. Remember fasting can be:
 - 1) Partial abstinence from food, not necessarily complete
 - 2) Just for one day or night, not necessarily for days and nights
- **Fasting is not an end, but a means to an end; a way to humble oneself before God**

CONCLUSION

1. Views about fasting have often been extreme...
 - a. "Some have exalted religious fasting beyond all Scripture and reason, and others have utterly disregarded it." - **John Wesley**
 - b. Some consider fasting unnecessary, therefore to be ignored; others think fasting is to be bound as a matter of faith (like baptism)
 - c. For the Christian, fasting is left primarily to individual discretion
2. When properly understood, fasting can be a valuable spiritual discipline...
 - a. A way to humble oneself before God
 - b. When joined with prayer, a way to solicit God's help

As we seek to exercise ourselves unto godliness (**2 Ti 4:7**), consider the practice of **fasting** as an appropriate complement to **prayer** and **meditation**..

Disciplines For The Disciple

The Discipline Of Singing

INTRODUCTION

1. Our study of spiritual disciplines have so far examined such spiritual exercises as...
 - a. **Prayer** - especially the value of secret, simple, and steadfast prayer
 - b. **Meditation** - contemplating God, His works, His words, and things worthy of virtue
 - c. **Fasting** - as a means of humbling one's self before God, especially when joined with prayer
2. Another discipline in which we engage regularly is **singing**...
 - a. We spend nearly a third of our assemblies engaged in this activity
 - b. Rightly so, for it has the potential of reaping great spiritual benefits
3. But I wonder if some do not appreciate the value of singing...
 - a. Many Christians sing with virtually no emotion, some do not sing at all!
 - b. I have known Christians, who...
 - 1) Complained because time available for classes was taken up by singing a few hymns
 - 2) Will not attend a worship service if they know it will be devoted to singing

[Singing as a spiritual discipline is of great value, and should be a habit engaged by those who desire to grow in godliness. To appreciate why, let's review...]

I. THE PURPOSE OF SINGING

A. TO PRAISE THE LORD (UPWARD)...

1. This is the most common concept of the purpose of singing
 - a. Indeed, this is certainly the idea inherent in the word '**hymn**'
 - b. Which comes from the Greek word **humnos**, meaning "a song in praise of"
2. The Psalms call upon us to praise God in song
 - a. "Sing praise to the LORD, you saints of His, And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name." - **Psa 30:4**
 - b. "Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; Sing praises with understanding." - **Psa 47:6-7**
 - c. "Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation." - **Psa 95:1**
 - d. "Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth." - **Psa 96:1**
 - e. "Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day." - **Psa 96:2**
 - f. "Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory." - **Psa 98:1**
 - g. "Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing." - **Psa 100:2**
 - h. "Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; Sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant." - **Psa 135:3**
3. Praising God in song should be a natural for Christians !
 - a. David reacted this way to the blessings of God - **Psa 28:6-7; 59:16-17**
 - b. Christians are taught to sing praises when joyful - **Ja 5:13**

- c. Paul and Silas even reacted to persecution by singing praises - **Ac 16:25**
- **Is not God worthy of being praised in song?**

B. TO TEACH AND ADMONISH ONE ANOTHER (OUTWARD)...

- 1. Singing is not always directed toward God...
 - a. Certainly, many songs are
 - b. But songs are often directed to each other - cf. **Co 3:16; Ep 5:19**
- 2. That's because many songs are designed to teach one another
 - a. Teaching and admonishing us to live properly, to enjoy the blessings of the Christian life
 - b. It might even be said that 'congregational singing' is actually 'congregational teaching'!
- **Do not our brethren deserve the encouragement that comes from singing?**

C. TO BE FILLED AND ENRICHED (INWARD)...

- 1. David wrote of the **personal benefit** of singing praises
 - a. It made his lips and soul to greatly rejoice - **Psa 71:23**
 - b. He found it to be pleasant and beautiful - **Psa 147:1**
- 2. Singing can be a means to being **filled with the Spirit**
 - a. Paul charged the Ephesians to be filled with the Spirit - **Ep 5:18**
 - b. He explained how: by singing and making melody in one's heart to the Lord - **Ep 5:19**
- 2. Singing can be a means to being **enriched by the Word of Christ**
 - a. Paul charged the Colossians to let the Word of Christ dwell in them richly - **Co 3:16a**
 - b. Again he explains: by singing with grace in one's heart to the Lord - **Co 3:16b**
- **For a truly Spirit-filled life enriched by the Word of Christ, singing is essential!**

[Singing is a wonderful spiritual discipline that blesses God, those who hear us, and even ourselves as we sing. How can we get more out this spiritual discipline? Here are some thoughts regarding...]

II. THE PRACTICE OF SINGING

A. ENGAGE THE MIND AS YOU SING...

- 1. Remember, singing is **teaching** and **admonishing** one another
- 2. This assumes that we understand what we sing - cf. **1 Co 14:15**
- 3. We must be careful that our enjoyment of singing is not like how many people enjoy their popular music (i.e., liking the music without necessarily understanding the words)
- **Give careful attention to the words of the songs**

B. ENGAGE THE HEART AS YOU SING...

- 1. When we sing, we must do so...
 - a. "with grace in your hearts" - **Co 3:16**
 - b. "making melody in your heart" - **Ep 5:19**
- 2. This assumes that we involve our 'heart strings' (emotions) as we sing!
- 3. To sing without emotion (without grace in our hearts)...
 - a. Is hypocritical, and condemned by Jesus! - **Mt 15:7-8**
 - b. Will be evident in our countenances! - cf. **Pro 15:13**
- **Put your heart into your singing**

C. ENHANCE YOUR SINGING IN WORSHIP BY WHERE YOU SIT...

- 1. Sitting alone or spread out discourages many from singing as they might otherwise
- 2. People become more involved, are more uplifted, edify others better, when they sit together

and closer to the song leader

- **One of the first steps to enjoy singing is to sit with others who love to sing!**

D. UTILIZE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN TO SING...

1. Singing is more enjoyable when we are able to read musical notes, sing different parts
 2. Churches often provide singing classes
 3. Indeed, every opportunity to sing is an opportunity to learn
- **Take advantage of any opportunity to learn how to sing**

E. EXPAND THE SPHERE OF YOUR SINGING...

1. Is your singing limited just to the public assemblies, on the first day of the week?
 2. Singing, like prayer, ought to be spontaneous, arising whenever the circumstances call for it
- cf. **Ac 16:25; Psa 34:1-3**
 3. Take advantage of special opportunities to sing, such as monthly and annual singings
 4. As a spiritual exercise, it should be done in private devotions as well as in public worship
 - a. Sing while you work, travel, or alone in your private meditations
 - b. Make use of hymns on tapes or CDs when traveling or meditating
- **Increase your opportunities to sing at other times with others, and when alone**

CONCLUSION

1. David exemplifies the attitude of one who exercises himself through the discipline of singing...
 - a. "I will sing to the LORD, Because He has dealt bountifully with me." - **Psa 13:6**
 - b. "I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing to You among the nations." - **Psa 57:9**
 - c. "I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being."
- **Psa 104:33**
2. He likewise calls upon us to sing praises both in **public** and in **private**...
 - a. "Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, And His praise **in the assembly of saints.**"
- **Psa 149:1**
 - b. "Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud **on their beds.**" - **Psa 149:5**

As we seek to exercise ourselves unto godliness (**2 Ti 4:7**), consider the discipline of **singing** as an appropriate complement to other spiritual activities such as **prayer, meditation, and fasting**...

Disciplines For The Disciple

The Discipline Of Fellowship

INTRODUCTION

1. Thus far in our study of spiritual disciplines we have looked at...
 - a. **Prayer** - especially the value of secret, simple, and steadfast prayer
 - b. **Meditation** - contemplating God, His works, His words, and things worthy of virtue
 - c. **Fasting** - a means of humbling one's self before God when joined with sincere prayer
 - d. **Singing** - which edifies the singer as well as praises God
2. Let's now take a look at the spiritual discipline of **fellowship**...
 - a. The Greek is **koinonia** and means "to share in, fellowship with, participation" - **CWSD**
 - b. The early church continued "steadfastly in...fellowship" - **Ac 2:42**
3. The idea is that Christians did things together...
 - a. They assembled together for worship
 - b. They spent time together in such activities as prayer, singing, etc.
 - c. They valued the time together as something beneficial

[To grow spiritually, we need to exercise ourselves unto godliness (**1 Ti 4:7**), and fellowship with other Christians is an important spiritual exercise. To appreciate why, consider...]

I. THE NEED FOR FELLOWSHIP

A. THE PROBLEM OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS...

1. Many Christians do not value their time with other Christians
 2. As evidenced by their:
 - a. Sporadic attendance of regular church services
 - b. Failure to visit and support gospel meetings elsewhere
 - c. Lack of interest in home Bible studies
 - d. Unwillingness to extend or accept offers of hospitality
 3. The main reason is the problem of self-centeredness
 - 1) Interested only in things pertaining to themselves
 - 2) With little concern for the needs of others
- **Self-centeredness is a real problem for many Christians today**

B. THE REASON FOR SELF-CENTEREDNESS...

1. Many of us lived through the "Me Decade"
 - a. The 1970's, distinguished by self-centered attitudes and self-indulgent behavior
 - b. A time in which there was...
 - 1) A rapid rise of crime against others - rape, theft, assault, murder
 - 2) An increased use of drugs and alcohol as a way of escape
 - 3) A turn to philosophies and religions which involve preoccupation with self:
 - a) "Looking Out For #1"
 - b) Transcendental Meditation (TM) and Yoga
 - 4) An emphasis on consumerism and materialistic gain

- c. A decade followed by the “Greed Decade” (the 1980's)
 - 2. Cultural trends today have produced many self-centered people
 - a. We live in a highly mobile society
 - 1) New families move in, and others move away
 - 2) Many live great distances from the place of worship and from each other
 - b. Technology designed to bring us closer together, can easily move us apart
 - 1) Phones, email, etc., greatly increase our ability to communicate
 - 2) But we can become stretched out so thin through such technology that we do not develop meaningful relationships
- **Such things have made it much easier to become isolated from one another**

[The problems of self-centeredness and isolation can be greatly reduced through the spiritual discipline of fellowship. Allow me to explain what I mean by describing...]

II. THE PRACTICE OF FELLOWSHIP

A. THROUGH ASSEMBLIES OF THE CHURCH...

- 1. We assemble regularly to exhort one another - **He 10:24-25**
 - 2. This we do through worship services and Bible classes
 - 3. Each time we assemble, we have fellowship with one another
 - 4. A main goal in such assemblies is mutual edification - **1 Co 14:26**
- **Faithful attendance of all the services of the church contributes greatly to fellowship**

B. THROUGH BIBLE STUDIES IN THE HOME...

- 1. Early Christians often met in their homes for Bible study - **Ac 5:42; 20:20**
 - 2. Such settings allow for personal attention and application of Scripture
- **Involvement in home Bible studies provides wonderful opportunity for fellowship**

C. THROUGH VISITING OTHER BRETHREN...

- 1. Area churches often have special events like gospel meetings
 - 2. This provides the opportunity for fellowship with brethren in other places - **Ph 1:5**
- **Attending gospel meetings is a great way to experience fellowship**

[Any occasion to be with brethren to praise God and study His word is an opportunity to practice the discipline of fellowship. To encourage such practices, let me conclude by briefly mentioning...]

III. THE BENEFIT OF FELLOWSHIP

A. TO FULFILL OUR DUTIES TO ONE ANOTHER...

- 1. To have a care for one another - **1 Co 12:26**
 - 2. To teach and admonish one another - **Co 3:16**
 - 3. To serve one another in love - **Ga 5:13**
 - 4. To pray for one another - **Ja 5:16**
 - 5. To restore one another - **Ja 5:19-20**
 - 6. To be hospitable to one another - **1 Pe 4:9**
- **When we fellowship frequently, such duties are more likely met**

B. TO RECEIVE HELP FROM ONE ANOTHER...

- 1. We need encouragement to remain faithful - **He 3:12-14**

2. We need comfort in times of tribulation - **2 Co 1:3-5; 1 Th 5:11**
 - a. Note that comfort comes from two sources: from God and each another
 - b. Thus God comforts both directly and indirectly
- **When we fellowship frequently, we are blessed by one another's faith and comfort**

CONCLUSION

1. As we think of the various "**Disciplines For The Disciple**"...
 - a. Let us not limit such spiritual exercises that can be done **alone**
 - b. Let us also value spiritual exercises that we can do **together**
2. In our desire to exercise ourselves unto godliness...
 - a. **Beware** of the danger of self-centeredness and isolation
 - b. **Be aware** of the value of assembling together in our churches and in our homes

Through such **fellowship** with other Christians, along with private **prayer, meditation, fasting, and singing**, we will grow in grace and godliness as disciples of Christ..

Disciplines For The Disciple

The Discipline Of Giving

INTRODUCTION

1. Summarizing what we have covered so far, “**Disciplines For The Disciple**” include:
 - a. **Prayer** - especially the value of secret, simple, and steadfast prayer
 - b. **Meditation** - contemplating God, His works, His words, and things worthy of virtue
 - c. **Fasting** - a means of humbling one’s self before God when joined with sincere prayer
 - d. **Singing** - which edifies the singer as well as praises God
 - e. **Fellowship** - communing with other Christians as we engage in spiritual activities
2. I also like to think of **giving** as a spiritual discipline...
 - a. Not just in the sense of giving money to someone in need
 - b. But in giving of one’s time, energy, or abilities, especially where it involves sacrifice
3. Such **giving** is certainly demonstrated in the New Testament...
 - a. By the example of the churches of Macedonia - **2 Co 8:1-5**
 - b. By the example of Christ Himself - **2 Co 8:9**

[To become more like Christ, which is the goal of spiritual discipline, we must exercise giving. To encourage us to give as we should, let’s take a closer look at **the example of the Macedonians...**]

I. GIVING PAR EXCELLENCE

A. THEY GAVE SACRIFICIALLY...

1. The Macedonians were in the midst of great affliction - **2 Co 8:2**
 2. They were experiencing poverty themselves - **2 Co 8:2**
 3. Yet they gave ‘beyond their ability’ - **2 Co 8:3a**
 4. This they were not expected to do - cf. **2 Co 8:12-13**
- **The best giving comes from those who cannot afford it (cf. Lk 21:1-4)**

B. THEY GAVE JOYFULLY...

1. Somehow they had discovered the joy of giving - **2 Co 8:2**
 2. Perhaps they took to heart the teaching of...
 - a. The Lord relating to the blessedness of giving - **Ac 20:35**
 - b. James to the value of persecution - **Ja 1:2-4**
 3. In any case, this is the kind of giving that God loves - **2 Co 9:7**
- **The best giving comes from those who give cheerfully**

C. THEY GAVE VOLUNTARILY...

1. They were ‘freely willing’ - **2 Co 8:3**
2. This is the kind of giving God requires today...
 - a. We can not command people to give against their will - cf. **2 Co 8:8**
 - b. We can only command how it is to be done to help needy saints abroad - cf. **1 Co 16:1-4**
3. Giving must come from ‘a willing mind’ - **2 Co 8:12**
4. Giving must never be done ‘begrudgingly’ or because you ‘have to’ - **2 Co 9:7**

5. Otherwise, you might as well not give at all
- **The best giving comes from those who give freely**

D. THEY GAVE PERSISTENTLY...

1. As Paul says, 'implored us with much urgency' - **2 Co 8:4**
2. They wouldn't take 'no' for an answer (or for an easy way out!)
3. With the Philippians, their giving to Paul persisted throughout his life - **Ph 4:10-18**
- **The best giving comes from those who persist**

E. THEY GAVE THEMSELVES...

1. Perhaps this explains how they were able to give as they did!
2. They gave themselves 'first to the Lord' - **2 Co 8:5**
 - a. When a person does this, they do not worry about 'the cost of giving'
 - b. For they have the promise of Jesus in **Mt 6:25-34**
3. Giving themselves first to the Lord, it is natural they would give 'then to us (others)'
 - a. For such is a mark of true discipleship - cf. **Jn 13:34-35**
 - b. And it is a mark of true love for God - cf. **1 Jn 4:20-21**
- **The best giving comes from those who give themselves to God**

[Such are the principles of giving par excellence. To help motivate us to give more like the Macedonians, let's now consider some...]

II. REASONS FOR GIVING

A. GOD BLESSES THE GIVER...

1. It is more blessed to give than to receive - **Ac 20:35**
2. The Lord blesses those who give - **Psa 41:1-3; Pro 19:17**
3. The grace of God is at work in those who give - **2 Co 8:1-2,6-7; 9:8,14**
- **Giving blesses the giver more than the recipient!**

B. GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER...

1. As Paul reminded the Corinthians - **2 Co 9:7**
2. A cheerful giver therefore need not worry - **Mt 6:30-33**
3. For God watches over those whom He loves - cf. **Lk 12:6-7**
- **Giving cheerfully makes one a recipient of God's care and love!**

C. GOD PROVIDES SEED FOR THE SOWER...

1. Those who sow bountifully will reap bountifully - **2 Co 9:6**
2. Not for personal consumption - **2 Co 9:8-9**
 - a. But to have 'all sufficiency in all things'
 - b. But to have 'an abundance for every good work'
 - c. As confirmed by a quote from Psalms - cf. **Psa 112:5-9**
3. To multiply the seed for even more good - **2 Co 9:10-11a**
 - a. To 'increase the fruits of your righteousness'
 - b. To be 'enriched for all liberality'
- **Giving liberally will be blessed to give even more liberally!**

D. GOD IS PRAISED BY GIVING...

1. Thanksgiving is offered by those whose needs are supplied - **2 Co 9:11b-12**

2. Glory is given to God for His grace in the lives of the givers - **2 Co 9:13-15**
- **Giving liberally will lead to God being praised liberally!**

E. BROTHERLY LOVE IS INCREASED BY GIVING...

1. By brethren who witness God's grace in the givers - **2 Co 9:14**
2. Causing them to love and long for their brethren - e.g., **Ph 1:3-8**
- **Giving liberally will strengthen the bonds of brotherly love!**

[We certainly have good reasons to give, and examples like the Macedonians inspiring us to give. Finally, some quick thoughts on...]

III. THE EXERCISE OF GIVING

A. THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS TO GIVE...

1. Giving is not limited to **money**
2. God may empower us to give in other ways - **1 Pe 4:10-11**
 - a. Our **talents** to teach or serve
 - b. Our **time** can be a great gift
3. Whatever our abilities and opportunities...
 - a. We are stewards of the manifold grace of God
 - b. We should minister our gifts to one another
 - c. We should do so with the ability God supplies
- **However you give, let it truly reflect God's grace in you!**

B. PLANNED GIVING LEADS TO CHEERFUL GIVING...

1. Purposeful giving is the key to giving cheerfully - cf. **2 Co 9:7**
2. One is less likely to give 'grudgingly or of necessity'
 - a. Because they have already set aside what they want to give
 - b. They are not caught off guard when someone asks them to give
3. This is how Paul instructed the Corinthians in their giving
 - a. To lay by in store on the first day of the week - cf. **1 Co 16:1-4**
 - b. To prepare their gift beforehand, so the resources were ready - cf. **2 Co 9:5**
4. An early Christian apologist, Aristides, wrote of how even slaves were able to give cheerfully through purposeful planning: "And if there is any that is a slave or a poor man, they fast two or three days and what they were going to set before themselves they send to them (Christians in prison), considering themselves to give good cheer even as they were called to give good cheer." (Apology 15)
- **So plan your giving if you wish to give cheerfully!**

C. SUGGESTIONS FOR GIVING...

1. Plan your giving to help the needy
 - a. We saw where Paul instructed planned giving to produce cheerful giving
 - b. As you prosper, set so much aside for 'individual benevolence'
 - c. Start a separate account into which you put aside a certain amount each pay period
 - d. Or send that amount to some charitable organization
2. Plan the use of your talents and time
 - a. Don't wait till someone asks you for help on the spur of the moment
 - b. Look at your schedule, and budget your time to offer your abilities (e.g., teaching)
3. Give to be seen of God, not man - **Mt 6:1-4**

- a. Like prayer and fasting, giving should be done to please God, not man
 - b. Through planned, frequent giving, it soon becomes second nature to which we give little thought
- **It is much easier and more blessed to give when you plan to give!**

CONCLUSION

1. Remember that the purpose of any spiritual discipline is to...
 - a. Help us grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ
 - b. Become more like Christ as we grow in godliness
2. The discipline of **giving** certainly helps to fulfill such a goal...
 - a. For God gave His only begotten Son - **Jn 3:16**
 - b. And Jesus gave Himself - **Mt 20:28**

Likewise the Macedonians gave themselves to the Lord first, and then to others (**2 Co 8:5**). As we exercise ourselves to godliness through **prayer, meditation, fasting, singing, and fellowship**, may we also be sure to add the grace of **giving**...

Disciplines For The Disciple

The Discipline Of Teaching

INTRODUCTION

1. Reviewing once more what we have covered in this series...
 - a. **Prayer** - especially the value of secret, simple, and steadfast prayer
 - b. **Meditation** - contemplating God, His works, His words, and things worthy of virtue
 - c. **Fasting** - a means of humbling one's self before God when joined with sincere prayer
 - d. **Singing** - which edifies the singer as well as praises God
 - e. **Fellowship** - communing with other Christians as we engage in spiritual activities
 - g. **Giving** - sharing sacrificially of money, time, and ability as God's grace allows
2. If a person spends much time exercising themselves in such spiritual disciplines...
 - a. They will undoubtedly grow in grace and knowledge as disciples of Christ
 - b. They will likely be able to share the benefits of such growth with others
3. That naturally leads us to the discipline of **teaching**...
 - a. Another spiritual exercise that can help us become more like Christ
 - b. For certainly He was the Master Teacher, who taught in public and private

[In discussing teaching as a spiritual discipline, let's first make an observation or two about...]

I. THE DUTY OF TEACHING

A. NOT ALL ARE TEACHERS...

1. There is the gift of teaching - **Ro 12:3-8**
 - a. Not every member has the same function in the body of Christ
 - b. Some are gifted by ability and opportunity to be teachers
 2. Not everyone is a teacher - **1 Co 12:28-31**
 - a. Just as not everyone is an apostle
 - b. Though we should strive to become the best we can be in Christ
 3. There is danger in becoming a teacher - **Ja 3:1-2**
 - a. There is stricter judgment for teachers
 - b. Which is why not many should become teachers
- **This pertains to teaching in a formal sense - cf. Ep 4:11-12**

B. BUT ALL SHOULD TEACH...

1. **Preachers** should teach others - **2 Ti 2:2**
 - a. Not just when evangelizing
 - b. But also when training disciples
2. **Elders** should teach the flock - **1 Ti 3:2; Ti 1:9**
 - a. Inherit in their duty as pastors to feed the flock
 - b. Sufficiently conversant in the Word to guard against error
3. **Teachers** who have the gift of teaching - **Ro 12:6-7**
 - a. Not just teachers of adult classes
 - b. But those with the ability to teach children!

4. **Parents** are to teach their children - **Ep 6:4; 2 Ti 1:5; 3:15**
 - a. Fathers bringing them up in the training and admonition of the Lord
 - b. Mothers and grandmothers doing the same as Eunice and Lois did for Timothy
 5. **Older women** should teach (KJV) the younger women - **Ti 2:3-5**
 - a. To train and admonish younger women as wives and mothers
 - b. Which can be done informally as well as formally
 6. **Everyone** should teach others concerning their hope - **1 Pe 3:15**
 - a. We are to have a hope that is visible
 - b. We are to be able to provide a reason for that hope
- **Informally at least, everyone should be able to teach - cf. He 5:12**

[Teaching in one way or another is incumbent on us all. That we might desire to teach, consider...]

II. THE DELIGHT OF TEACHING

A. THE FRUIT BORN IN OURSELVES...

1. William Glasser (psychologist) said that we learn:
 - a. **10%** of what we **read**
 - b. **20%** of what we **hear**
 - c. **30%** of what we **see**
 - d. **50%** of what we **see and hear**
 - e. **70%** of what we **discuss with others**
 - f. **80%** of what we **experience personally**
 - h. **95%** of what we **teach others**
 2. Thus we benefit...
 - a. Not just by the study required to teach
 - b. But by the actual process of teaching to others!
 3. The blessedness of teaching comes from:
 - a. First, meditating on God's Word - cf. **Psa 1:1-3**
 - b. Second, doing God's Word - cf. **Jn 13:17; Ja 1:25**
 - c. Finally, teaching itself, especially when we see the fruit that comes (see next)
- **Who benefits most from teaching? The teacher!**

B. THE FRUIT BORN IN OTHERS...

1. Note the great joy experienced by John - **3 Jn 3-4**
 - a. He had heard of those he taught walking in truth
 - b. Hearing that was his greatest joy
 2. Note the joy and comfort experienced by the aged Paul - **Phe 4-7**
 - a. He heard of Philemon's love and faith
 - b. Which refreshed his heart and the hearts of others
 3. Note the hope, joy, and crown of rejoicing - **1 Th 1:3; 2:19**
 - a. He remembered their faith, love and hope
 - b. It gave him great anticipation regarding the Lord's coming
 4. Thus there is great joy from seeing the fruit of our teaching
 - a. Seeing people respond to the gospel in faith, repentance, and baptism!
 - b. Seeing people grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ!
- **Many will never experience such joy because they do not teach!**

[Finally, some thoughts on developing...]

III. THE DISCIPLINE OF TEACHING

A. FIRST, BECOME A STUDENT...

1. Notice the example of Ezra, the young priest - **Ezr 7:6,10**
 - a. He was a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses
 - b. He began by preparing his heart to seek God's Word
 2. Remain a student
 - a. A good teacher never stops learning
 - b. Just as Paul never stopped striving for perfection - **Ph 3:13-15**
- **Are we truly students of the Word?**

B. SECOND, BECOME A DOER...

1. Again, notice the example of Ezra - **Ezr 7:10**
 - a. He prepared his heart not only to **seek** God's Word
 - b. But also to **do** God's Word!
 2. Practice what we teach
 - a. Otherwise we are simply hypocrites like the Pharisees - **Mt 23:2-3**
 - b. Our example will reinforce the validity of what we teach
- **Are we putting into practice God's Word?**

C. THIRD, BECOME A TEACHER...

1. The example of Ezra - **Ezr 7:10,11,25; Neh 8:1-9**
 - a. Having first become a student and a doer of the Word
 - b. He became an "expert" and was given the opportunity to teach
 2. When first starting to teach...
 - a. Find a mentor, someone whose example you can follow
 - b. Be willing to assist, like Timothy did for Paul
- **Whether formally, or informally, are we becoming teachers of God's Word?**

CONCLUSION

1. Spiritual growth begins by **learning**, it continues by **teaching**...
 - a. The babe in Christ starts on milk - cf. **He 5:13**
 - b. But as one grows in Christ, they are able to handle solid food - cf. **He 5:14**
2. As we grow in spiritual maturity...
 - a. Do we just keep the blessings of grace and knowledge to ourselves?
 - b. Would that not be selfish, a step backward toward spiritual immaturity?
3. When we grow by exercising ourselves through such disciplines as...
 - a. Prayer, meditation, and fasting
 - b. Singing, fellowship, and giving

...then let's be sure to take it to the next level: **the discipline of teaching!** As disciples of Christ, seeking to become more and more like Him, can we do any less...?