

# SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

## WEEK 2: THE DISCIPLINE OF BIBLE INTAKE—HEARING, READING & STUDYING

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

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- Have you ever wondered how to grow in Christ? What is the believer's role in his or her own sanctification? How can we move from simply wanting to grow to actually seeing real spiritual growth in a way that honors God and avoids self-reliance? What examples can we follow in growing in godliness?
- This multi-week course will look at the biblical call for believers to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, while wholly leaning on God's strength as he powerfully works within us!
- God calls us to pursue holiness, train up our children, grow in spiritual wisdom, knowledge and understanding, and be transformed by the renewing of our minds. So, this course will look practically at the training we do as we trust in the Lord with all of our heart!
- We will discover through personal testimony, biblical foundations, and historical accounts how to get the spiritual workout we need to walk worthy. No discipline is easy, so we will also talk about where the pitfalls and hurdles are that keep us from running the race well.
- **Class Schedule:**
  - April 26: Introduction and Maturity in Godliness
  - **May 3: Discipline of Bible Intake**
  - May 10: Discipline of the Mind
  - May 17: Discipline of Time and Money
  - May 24: No Class, Memorial Day Weekend
  - May 31: Discipline of Prayer
  - June 7: Discipline of Service
  - June 14: Discipline of Perseverance
  - June 21: Discipline of Worship
  - June 28: Discipline of Evangelism

### INTRODUCTION TO THIS DISCIPLINE

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- There are Christians who are truly saved, but find themselves in churches that have little actual connection with the Word of God. We had a friend whom God had truly saved, yet because she was not yet grounded in the Scriptures, she didn't realize how unbiblical the church or movement she attended actually was. The fact of her authentic salvation was proven in that after personal Bible study, and study

with others, she left those places and joined a Bible-believing, Good News-preaching church. This helps to point to the remarkable, absolute need for Christians to take in the Word of God. Christians, we will not grow without meaningful exposure to the truth of the Word of God.

- This morning then, we will look into the spiritual discipline of Bible Intake. To say it this way sounds a bit cold, or technical—“Bible Intake.” I get that sentiment, but when we look into the various ways that we “get God’s truth into us,” it is hard to talk about that without trying to develop a meaningful shorthand term.
- What do we mean by Bible Intake then?
  - **Hearing the Word of God<sup>1</sup>**
    - Through reading by others—this was essentially the only way for many Christians in the past. Having many written copies of the Bible around is a more “recent” phenomena. Before 1517, everything, including Bibles or Bible portions were handwritten. Now, we have copies of God’s Word easily available—in hardcopy or digitally.
    - Regardless of how many copies around, we still need to come *under the sound* of the Word of God. God designed us to gain wisdom and understanding aurally—by hearing.
    - And in a real sense, we’re talking about active hearing—the kind that listens to and *heeds* the Word of God:  
**Proverbs 23:19-22** <sup>9</sup> Listen, my son, and be wise, And direct your heart in the way....  
<sup>22</sup> Listen to your father who begot you, And do not despise your mother when she is old.
    - We *gain* wisdom simply by *hearing* wisdom. It’s not everything, but it is a start.
  - **Reading the Word of God**
    - Consider the truths of Revelation 1:3—let’s read it together
      - How can someone find God’s blessing? By reading and heeding the Word of God
    - We will not move toward godliness, including holiness without reading God’s Word
  - **Studying the Word of God**
    - Ezra 7:10 Notice the three actions of Ezra, the priest and scribe for Israel after the Exile. They needed someone who would help them return to the ways of God—and they could only do so by learning the Word of God.
      - He devoted himself to the *study* of God’s Word—and helped others in that
      - He devoted himself to *obey* the Word of God—helping others in that
      - He specifically *taught* the Word of God to others

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<sup>1</sup> These main categories are from Don Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, chapter 2.

- God has always designed for his people to labor in the Scriptures for the sake of godliness. This is not ultimately to be some individualistic discipline—but a shared thing.
- *Are we studying?* Here is RC Sproul:
 

“Here then is the real problem of our negligence. We fail in our duty to study God’s Word not so much because it is difficult to understand, not so much because it is dull and boring, but because it is *work*. Our problem is not a lack of intelligence or a lack of passion. Our problem is that we are lazy.”<sup>2</sup>            Ouch!!! Is he correct?
- So, quickly this morning, we will walk through these sub-disciplines, and if time permits, we will do some basic interpretation of a familiar Bible passage. I offer the last part with the hope that we will make some extra effort, on a growing basis, to strive to better understand what God has said in his Word.
  - The goal of our class is to encourage each other toward godliness, maturity, Christ-likeness.
 

**Hebrews 12:14** <sup>14</sup> Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

**Psalm 37:30-31** <sup>30</sup> The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, And his tongue speaks justice. <sup>31</sup>  
**The law of his God is in his heart;** His steps do not slip.

## BIBLICAL EXPECTATIONS

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### What it isn’t:

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- This is not about adding some sort of ritual, or legalistic effort to your life.
- This is not to add to some sort Trivial Pursuit type of knowledge.
- This is not about using added Bible knowledge as a means of measuring spirituality, or for comparing yourself with others.

### What it is:

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Good methods, practices, habits, right thinking, etc.

Gaining wisdom and skill for a godly, hopeful life:

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<sup>2</sup> RC Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, p. 17

**Proverbs 2:2-12** Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding; <sup>3</sup> For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; <sup>4</sup> If you seek her as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures; <sup>5</sup> Then you will discern the fear of the LORD And discover the knowledge of God. <sup>6</sup> For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding. <sup>7</sup> He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; *He is* a shield to those who walk in integrity, <sup>8</sup> Guarding the paths of justice, And He preserves the way of His godly ones. <sup>9</sup> Then you will discern righteousness and justice And equity *and* every good course. <sup>10</sup> For wisdom will enter your heart And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; <sup>11</sup> Discretion will guard you, Understanding will watch over you, <sup>12</sup> To deliver you from the way of evil...

## LET'S WALK THROUGH THE BASICS

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### Hearing the Word of God

### Reading the Word of God

# Studying the Word of God

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## A Study and Interpretive Tool: Sentence/Passage Analysis

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### Pattern:

Subject Modifier	And/But/Or (Similar)	Verb Modifier(s) Modifiers(s)	Object Modifier(s)	Indirect Object Modifier(s)
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### Asking Questions:

- What is the Passage Talking About (in the Main)? [The Topic]
- What does it Say about What it is Talking About? Generally this is several answers [The Assertion(s)]
- Can you come up with a Take Home Idea by forming a Question based on the Topic, with the Assertion forming the Answer?
- If this seems sort of technical, I get it, but actually our minds are doing this as we read anything, and as we hold conversations.

**Example:** John 3:16---We will work this out in class.

**ARE THERE COMANDS, EXAMPLES, AND PRINCIPLES IN THE SCRIPTURES  
ABOUT OUR NEED TO DO THIS KIND OF EFFORT?**

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**FRUIT OF OUR LABORS:**

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