



MTA 2015 “The Disciplined Life” Class Notes

INTRODUCTION

Key passage: 1 Timothy 4:7b-8 rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

“Train yourself to be godly”

Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness... NASB

Train yourself for godliness... ESV

Exercise thyself rather unto godliness... KJV

Why study this?

- It is essential for our pursuit of God and godliness.
- Our spiritual bodies are like our physical bodies (in need of exercise).
- Our Lord demonstrated this for us.

Discipline marked the early church.

“discipline” ←—Lat: *disciplinae* = courses of learning/training

“The Spiritual Disciplines are those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth... They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times.” — Whitney, *SDCL*

Key Ideas

- Thought-life patterns (activities, not just attitudes)
- Spiritual exercises
- Focused gospel responses
- Deliberate choices
- Conscious habits (not necessarily natural)
- Altering actions (breaking the normal cycle of life)
- Scriptural paths

Results

- Spiritual Disciplines are catalysts for change.
- Disciplining yourself brings godliness (which Whitney defines as both closeness to Christ and conformity to Christ).
- Rightly motivated doing results in being.

Focus: Seven Disciplines

Bible Study (includes Journaling, Learning)

Prayer (includes Silence/Solitude)

Fasting

Worship

Service

Stewardship

Evangelism

DISCIPLINE #1. BIBLE STUDY

Matt 4.4, Luke 11.28, Rom 10.17
Reports from McRindle, CRA, CT

The example of Ezra

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

Note Ezra's threefold goal:

- To study (Heb: *darash*); meaning, to inquire or seek understanding
- To observe (Heb: *asah*); meaning, to act out or practice
- To teach (Heb: *lamad*); meaning, to instruct or train

The conviction of Paul

2 Tim 2:15; 2 Tim 4:9, 13

Aspects of Bible study ("Scripture Intake")

Receiving God's Word → Hearing + Reading

Studying God's Word

Observation, Interpretation, Application

Context, Principle, Application

Meditation and Memorizing God's Word

1.1 MEDITATION

Jos 1:8 ESV, Psalm 1:1-3 (cf. Ps 39:3, "as I mused, the fire burned." NASB)

Ps 119:98-99

See Psalm 77 for an example of reflection, meditation, and remembrance.

Whitney's Meditation Methods

1. Repeat the verse or phrase with emphasis on a different word each time.
2. Rewrite the verse or phrase in your own words.
3. Look for applications of this text – what should you do in response to it?
4. Formulate a principle from the text.
5. Pray through the text.
6. Ask the Philippians 4:8 questions.
 - What is true about this, or what truth does it exemplify?
 - What is honorable about this?
 - What is just or right about this?
 - What is pure about this, or how does it exemplify purity?
 - What is lovely about this?
 - What is commendable about this?
 - What is excellent about this (that is, excels others of this kind)?
 - What is praiseworthy about this?
7. Ask the "Joseph Hall" questions.
 - What is it (define and/or describe what it is)? What are its divisions or parts?
 - What causes it?
 - What does it cause (its fruits and effects)? What is its place, location or use?
 - What is lovely about it?
 - What is admirable or commendable about it? What is excellent about it?
 - What is praiseworthy about it?
 - What are its qualities and attachments?

- What is contrary, contradictory or different to it? What compares to it?
 - What its titles or names?
 - What are the testimonies or examples of Scripture about it?
8. Discover a minimum number of insights into the text (set the number in advance).
9. Find a link or common thread between all the chapters of paragraphs you've read.
10. Use Meditation Mapping.
- A. Put the verse(s), phrase, word or topic to be meditated upon in the middle of the page. (When possible, this should be done in picture form.)
 - B. Allow insights, ideas and thoughts to come quickly and freely.
 - C. Use key words to represent your ideas.
 - D. Connect your key words ideas to the central focus with lines.
 - E. Use as few words per line as possible.
 - F. P-r-i-n-t all the words for easier reading.
 - G. Use color for emphasis and recall.
 - H. Make frequent use of symbols and pictures in addition to words.

1.2 MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE

Psalm 119:11, Proverbs 22:17-18

Memorizing tips

- Have a plan
- Write out the verses
- Draw picture reminders
- Memorize the verses word-perfectly
- Find a method of accountability
- Review and meditate every day

1.3 JOURNALING

A journal may be a place for:

- insights into Scripture
- lengthy theological musings
- spontaneous devotional thoughts, and
- prayer requests (and answers)

NO obligation, NO correct style.

RATE YOUR BIBLE STUDY

Consistency	1	2	3	4	5
Depth	1	2	3	4	5
Heart-connection	1	2	3	4	5
Relevance	1	2	3	4	5

DISCIPLINE #2. PRAYER

Col 4:2 ESV ("Devote yourselves..." NIV)

Acts 6:3b-4

The value of prayer

- It is God's given method of access into his presence.
- In prayer we encounter him relationally and are comforted, directed, and strengthened.
- Prayer is proof that God desires to be with us.

Barriers to prayer

- We don't plan for prayer
- We doubt anything will happen if we pray
- We lack a sense of the nearness of God
- We have little awareness of real need
- We haven't learned about prayer
- We find prayer boring

NT Word Study

1. *proseuchomai* – to earnestly desire to be near to God.
Luke 5:16; 6:12
Act 8:15
1 Timothy 2:8
2. *deomai* – to request something to address a need or lack, sometimes used with urgency.
Matthew 9:38
Luke 22:31-32
Acts 8:22
3. *parakaleo* - to call, summon, or invite
Matthew 26:53
Mark 1:40
4. *aiteo* – to request or demand, usually for oneself.
Matthew 18:19-20
5. *erotao* – to say a personal request or question.
John 14:16-17

Consistency and Variety

Eph 6:18, Phil 1:4, 1 Thess 5:16-18
Note various psalm types

For leaders

RATE YOUR PRAYER LIFE

Consistency	1	2	3	4	5
Depth	1	2	3	4	5
Heart-connection	1	2	3	4	5
Relevance	1	2	3	4	5

DISCIPLINE #3. FASTING

Matt 6:16
Acts 13:2, 14:23

Examples of fasting

- Moses
- Elijah
- King David

- King Jehoshaphat
- Prophet Joel
- The people of Nineveh

In Church History: Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, John Knox, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, etc.

The basic O.T. fast

- Old Testament example: fasting on the Day of Atonement.
- This 24-hour fast was from sunset of one day to sunset of the next (Leviticus 16:29;23:32).
- According to the *Mishnah, Yoma 8:1*, on the Day of Atonement it is forbidden to eat, or drink, or bathe, or anoint oneself, or wear sandals, or to indulge in conjugal intercourse" (Zondervan Encyclopedia).
- Jesus and the disciples practiced this basic fast in the New Testament, but also did so for extended periods of time.

Fasting as a discipline

- Goes with prayer; increases reliance on God
- Must always be done with an attitude of humility
- May be seen as preparation for battle
- Moves you from the physical to the spiritual realm
- Abstinence of something of value to achieve something of greater value
- Brings spiritual strength

See John 4:31-35

Practical suggestions

- It may be done as a regular event (periodic) or occasionally. Plan it well and don't be impulsive (like Saul in 1 Sam 14). Be clear on your purpose.
- It is a good idea to decide how long you are going to fast for before you start. Christians usually start with short periods of time (with supervision) until they gain proficiency with fasting.
- The "Daniel Fast" may be seen as a "partial fast." This gives some the idea of refraining from types of food, alcohol, TV, movies, sports/hobbies, etc. Note that Daniel 1 is descriptive more than prescriptive.
- Don't get undernourished! Feed on Scripture during your fast. Job 23:12 "I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread." (cf. Matt 4:4).

DISCIPLINE #4. WORSHIP

Psalm 95:8-9

Heb 12:28 ESV

Revelation 5:12-14

Note: The Greek word most often translated "worship" (proskuneo) means "to fall down before" or "to bow down before."

Worship is...

Worship is focusing on and responding to god

Worship is done in spirit and truth

Worship is both private and public

Family Worship

- It's essential for worship to be learned and experienced in the home.
- There are three basic elements of worship for any setting (both church and home). The three are Bible reading, prayer, and singing.

Worship and Humility

Matt 4:10, Phil 2:5-8 NLT

Discussion/Reflection:

- Whitney defines worship as follows: "To worship God is to ascribe the proper worth to God, to magnify His worthiness of praise, or better, to approach and address God as He is worthy." Do you agree with this definition? Why or why not?
- What is the difference between worshiping God as He is revealed in the Bible and worshiping Him as you might want Him to be?
- Comment on the following quote regarding modern man: "He worships his work, works at his play, and plays at his worship."

DISCIPLINE #5. STEWARDSHIP

Matthew 6:19-21

Proverbs 30:8-9

Definition

Stewardship is basically the care and management of that which belongs to someone else.

- All that we have is God's.
- Note Paul's reminder to the Corinthians: "What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7).
- God has made us caretakers (managers) of the stuff in His world for several reasons, including two important ones:

1. Enjoyment. God wants us to do more than just survive; He wants us to be happy and to enjoy the things of this world. 1 Timothy 6:17

2. Sharing. God wants us to share in his blessings and share those blessings with others. 2 Corinthians 8:7

Talkin' money

Matt 6:24

Stewardship for leaders

Phil 4:11, Luke 16:11

1 Tim 3:2 (Grk: *anepileptos*)

Guiding principles

- Learned Contentment - We can learn to be content. Contentment is mentioned some 7 times in the Bible and 6 times it has to do with money (e.g. Phil 4:11-12)
- Willing Accountability - We need to be open about our finances and get help when needed. This is part of preserving integrity.
- Conjugal Unity - Married couples would do well to be completely united in financial matters.

Practical suggestions

1. Be aware of the pitfalls of materialism.

2. Have a working family budget: written, consolidated, regularly discussed and evaluated.
3. "Pay yourself" first (savings). Have clear goals for savings (including 0 debt). E.g. 10-10-80 scheme.
4. Practice 3 S's - Stewardship, Simplicity, Sharing
SSS for kids: "Save some, spend some, share some."

DISCIPLINE #6. SERVICE

1 Peter 4:10-11
Romans 12:4-8 ESV

Practical Suggestions

- Be convinced that serving is God's way to fulfill his mission. For many, this should be part of our daily prayers.
- Discover and hone your gifts.
- Be a team player. Learn to work with others with different gifts and abilities.
- For leaders, be reminded that delegation is part of our responsibility and necessary for effective service to God.
- When appreciated, be gracious and remember to give glory to God and appropriate credit to others.

DISCIPLINE #7. EVANGELISM

Col 4:5-6
Acts 8:4

GOSPEL → "GOSPELER"

Practical Suggestions

- Keep an "as-you-go" attitude (Matt 28:19, "while going..." in Grk).
- Be genuinely interested in people.
- Keep a prayer list.
- Be confident in your personal testimony.

Putting It All Together

- The goal is to be godly (1 Tim 4:7b).
- Christians are typically busy people regularly occupied by demands of church, family and work.
- Personal commitment is essential in practicing spiritual disciplines.

Seven disciplines (+ three virtues)

Bible Study
Prayer
Fasting
Worship
Service
Stewardship
Evangelism

Result: The Spiritual Leader

APPENDIX A

PASSAGES ON FASTING (FOR FURTHER STUDY)

Ezra 8:21-23; 10:6

Nehemiah 1:4

Esther 4:16

Job 33:19,20

Psalms 69:10; 102:4

Isaiah 58:6

Daniel 9:3,20-23; 10:3

Joel 2:15

Exodus 34:28

Deuteronomy 9:9,18

2 Samuel 12:16,17

Matthew 4:2; 6:16; 9:15

Acts 13:3; 14:23

1 Corinthians 7:5

2 Corinthians 11:27,28

Jonah 3:5,10

APPENDIX B

“Catalyst Discipling Time”

1. Read Joshua 1:8-9 and Psalm 139:1-4, 23-24.

2. Discuss: We can meditate on the Word of God through three basic questions:

a. Based upon what I have read, what are some spiritual patterns of thinking I need to develop?

b. Based upon what I have read, what are the Godly patterns of behavior and relating to others I can work on?

3. The Bible holds great promise for those who apply themselves to Scripture and to spiritual disciplines.

a. Spiritual nourishment and vitality

b. Confidence before God

c. Better relationships with people

d. Spiritual growth

4. Read Ephesians 4:22-24. Take time this week and review what you need to put off and what you need to put on.

APPENDIX C

“Self-Confrontation and Repentance Focus sheet”

(After reading Ephesians 4:22-24 and Colossians 3:5-10)

Sinful thoughts/desires I need to confess and repent of:	Godly thoughts/desires I need to replace them with:
Sinful words I need to confess and repent of:	Godly words I need to replace them with:
Sinful behavior and actions I need to confess and repent of:	Godly behavior and actions I need to replace them with:
Sinful relational patterns I need to confess and repent of:	Godly relational patterns I need to replace them with:
Areas I have neglected to serve God as He has designed me:	Areas I will serve God as He has designed me to serve:
Movies, Media, Music, Books, Relationships, Products, and Places that are leading me to partake in sin and ungodliness as I indulge them:	Movies, Media, Music, Books, Relationships, Products, and Places that I must replace them with in order to walk in a holy and sacrificial lifestyle for Christ: