

Influence Ministries

FIVE THINGS GOD USES TO GROW YOUR FAITH

LESSON 4

TITLE: PRIVATE DISCIPLINES.

Today we're talking about the word discipline, which is a horrible word. It's kind of like the "D" word; it's the thing that we all love to ignore. Discipline:

Discipline: Things you're supposed to do that you don't want to do.

Like get up earlier, go to bed earlier, eat less –

You've got to eat less, you've got to eat healthier,

you've got to exercise more, you've got to save more money,

you've got to spend less money, you've got to budget better,

you're going to have to spend more one-on-one time with your kids,

you need to find time for yourself.

You meet people who are more disciplined than you, and on one hand you're inspired and on the other hand you want to kill them.

Isn't that true? It's like, Would they just go away?

The interesting thing about discipline, is that things that often start or begin as disciplines become very pleasant habits.

Sometimes they become hobbies; sometimes they become almost addictions or obsessions.

Then it moved from a discipline to like an obsession.

Now it's like a lifestyle. Many things that begin that way, that begin just as disciplines that you've gutted out you actually enjoy.

Discipline always results in progress.

In any arena where you're disciplined with something there is always progress, and the interesting thing is there is progress even if you have a bad attitude.

Someone once said, discipline is doing what you don't want to do now so that you can do what you want to do later.

And it's really, in essence, discipline is all about delayed gratification.

But today I want to talk about this third one: **PRIVATE DISCIPLINES**

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Whenever you hear people talk about their faith journey or tell their story they always talk about learning how to pray.

They learn to set aside time in the day and they talk about sort of this, it really is a discipline, a decision to carve out time in the day for God.

And the other thing that they'll talk about, eventually, has to do with money.

That people learn over time how to give. And giving, for almost every person I've ever met who is a Christian, giving began as kind of a gut-wrenching, sheer discipline.

We're going to talk specifically about this today—how faith intersects with our finances. Now, this isn't a giving sermon.

It began as a discipline, now it's a joy. It began as a discipline but now I can't imagine a day without it.

The other thing I want you to think about tonight is if you find yourself resisting, I want you to pay attention to that because I think it's important, especially in the context of these verses, to recognize in your heart what are you resisting.

God stretches or exhausts your faith in order to build it.

And these private, personal, spiritual disciplines are a part of that.

But unlike some of the other things we're going to talk about, this is an arena where you can make a decision to be involved at whatever level you choose to be involved.

Matthew 6:1 (NIV)

1"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them...

Why—because these are private disciplines.

...If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

Matthew 6:4

so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

What if you really believed that?

I would argue that one of the reasons you're not more generous is because you do not believe that.

And the issue is not money; the issue is your confidence or your faith in God.

In fact, you read what the New Testament says about money. Money is almost always a faith, believe-in-God issue, because God doesn't need your money.

If you really believed it there would be no sense of, Or, write the check.

Here comes the bucket. I hope he doesn't talk about money; all they want is money.

If you really believed and if I really believed God saw it and rewarded, it.

It would be like, here's another opportunity.

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And the reason you don't feel that way, the reason you don't feel that way is you don't believe this.

However you picture eternity you are counting and trusting in God 100% for everything that happens from the moment you breathe your last breath out.

And the reason you're completely trusting God for that is because you don't have any choice.

Matthew 6:5 (NIV)

And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

Matthew 6:6 (NIV)

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Here is the arena where you can proactively engage with God,

and really, it's a discipline, that will build your faith, and these are disciplines.

Matt 6 PRIVATE DISCIPLINES

GIVE

PRAY

FAST