

## Today is the Day The Narrow Path Requires Training

**Romans 5:3-4** And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, 4 endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope.

*Character* -> becoming the people God want us to be.

### What does God want us to be?

**1 Timothy 1:5** Now the goal of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.

**Psalm 51:6** Surely you desire integrity in the inner self, and you teach me wisdom deep within.

The *gift* of faith -> through the experience of salvation we are given faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The *fruit* of faith -> our faith grows and produces fruit as we mature in the gifts of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

**Question:** Do you believe in God? Or, Do you believe God?

### What is God's goal (intention) for us?

Growth — into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness (Ephesians 4:13).

Spiritual Formation requires *training*.

Growth requires a life of *training*!

**2 Peter 1:5-9** For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, 6 knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, 7 godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being useless or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 The person who lacks these things is blind and shortsighted and has forgotten the cleansing from his past sins.

Training takes into consideration the obstacles.

- Sin is a significant and consistent obstacle to Spiritual Formation.
- We sin because we want to and we want to because we are looking for something that will "satisfy" (whatever our idea of satisfaction is).

Sin is an avoidance of God's best.

Sin does not, it can not, and it will not bring into our lives wholeness.

The pleasure of sin is short lived and most frequently followed by regret.

Sin creates chaos.

**Hebrews 11:24-25** By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter 25 and chose to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin.

- Choosing to walk the narrow path and not engaging in sin makes room in our lives for spiritual growth. In our spiritual growth faith becomes fruitful.
- The fruit of faith gives us the increased capacity to believe God.
- When we believe God we struggle less with sin.

For our faith to endure (persevere) we must train.

Read **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**

**vs. 24**, Concerning spiritual growth (how's your running?)

Are you out of breath? Do your muscles ache? Are you quick to say, what's the point?

In the last year have you become more patient or less? More irritable or less? More loving or less? More kind or less? More excited about Jesus or less?

**vs. 25**, They go into strict training.

What is your plan? What is your motivation?

**vs. 26**, I live life with purpose, contentment, and Jesus centrality.

How will you experience a vibrant spiritual life?

- Why wouldn't you train your soul so that you can experience long-term abundant living?

Practicing the way of Jesus simply means learning from him how to arrange my life around activities that enable me to live in the fruit of the Spirit [Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Self Control (Galatians 5:22-23)]

1. Practicing the way of Jesus (spiritual practices / disciplines) are not to display your self-determined holiness.
  - Spiritual wholeness is indicated by growth in loving God and loving people.
2. Spiritual practices / disciplines don't have to be unpleasant.
  - What are the things that bring our hearts and minds joy? What fills us with wonder and gratitude (gazing at the stars)? Practices over time cultivate joy.
3. Spiritual practices / disciplines are not a way to earn favor with God.
  - Our aim is not legalism. We can't be good enough to earn God's forgiveness.

What is training?

Any activity I can do by direct effort that will help me do what I cannot now do by direct effort.

Spiritual practices allow us to do what we cannot do by willpower alone.

As you step into the week of prayer and practice...

- Ask for a kingdom perspective and not an earthly one.
- Learn to think supernaturally not just practically.
- Expect God to do the unexpected.
- Be ready to participate in what the Holy Spirit is doing (1 Peter 3:15).
- Remember God is actively at work all around us.
- Keep your heart, soul, mind, and strength focused on the source of abundant living (John 15:5).
- Find deep joy in growth and progress (Titus 2:7).

A Jesus follower who trains is someone who discerns when laughter, gentleness, silence, healing words, or rebuke is called for, and offers it promptly, effectively, and lovingly.

Praise & Thanksgiving

Confession

Solitude & Simplicity

Serving

Feasting

Sabbath