

# COMMISSIONED

THE ART OF LIVING OUT THE  
WORDS, WAYS, & MISSION OF JESUS

## 4.3 Engaging in Spiritual Disciplines Way of Formation

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Remember, practice makes permanent. That's what my director would shout during rehearsals while preparing for our next show. While I was growing up, I performed in theater, and musicals and dance recitals. The director's instruction would remind us that the repetition of practice and doing each move with full commitment would guarantee the best delivery. The way you practiced it was the way it was going to execute when the nerves were high. It was the way you trained your body to follow the choreography or the script almost without thinking about it.

We were also reminded to keep up with our training. To take vocal coaching or dance classes, improv theater. Before a show, we knew to warm up our voice, to stretch our muscles. These were the disciplines that were designed to make us stronger, quicker, more intuitive. They made us people of instinct. The drills, the rehearsals, they were our preparation.

Spiritual disciplines are the same way. Exercises like prayer, fasting, confession, worship and journaling, they can become dry and rote and sometimes it can be hard to see their impact. Maybe you've experienced this as well, right? Maybe 10 minutes into prayer and that nasty inner voice questions the sanity or the productivity of spending time on what you're doing. But when I encounter the tense, painful, those important moments in life, I realize that the spiritual disciplines are not meant just to keep us busy. They prepare us to deliver to the best of our ability. They train us into Christ likeness.

The disciplines and the drills are not the goals. They're the preparation to attaining the ultimate goal. 1 Timothy 4:7-8 says "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives tales, 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."

Becoming a leader worth following requires training and means implementing some spiritual practices in our lives. Spiritual disciplines, they're the habits that direct our lives. They're things like Scripture reading and this is not just reading the Scriptures, but meditating on Scripture, studying Scripture, memorizing Scripture. The one most often forgotten or left out, the

personal application of Scripture to your daily life. As James says in 1:22, "Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourself, but do what it says."

Things like prayer, the service towards others, that living out of our faith, silence and solitude. It's journaling to keep record of what the Lord has done. It's community, engaging in relationship with others that strengthen our faith and point us back to the Lord. Just like we can't drift into good character, we also can't drift into spiritual growth. It's important to set some goals, some commitments to keep one's self on track. It requires being specific. Saying I'm going to read my Bible more doesn't typically get you very far. A specific commitment will increase the benefit. Something like for the month of January I'm going to read through the book of James once a week and I'm going to write down daily observations that I can practically apply in my life.

It's also important to change the routine from time to time. If you always work out the same way, your muscles will grow accustomed to the routine and it will cease to be affected by it. The same is true with our spiritual workouts. Consider picking up a new translation of the Bible to maybe give you a new lens.

Once I've read a verse or a passage too many times in the same translation, I begin to read right over it without allowing its meaning to penetrate my heart. Reading from a different translation can make those familiar passages come alive again. Occasionally I might even change how I pray and what I'm praying about in order to break out of old or predictable and stale cycles. If I've been praying a lot in solitude, I'll try engaging more in community prayer. If I've been saturated by community, I'll seek solitude in silence. We need to change our routines so that they're no longer routine.

Journaling can also become an important part of advancing your spiritual growth. In the education world it's understood that having to write something down or share it with another can actually seal it in our brain. When I reflect on what I'm learning or experiencing and I write it down, I will learn more and see more. This is just a short list of steps that you can take to shore up the foundation of your faith. It's through these spiritual disciplines that you can ensure growth and maturity and your relationship with the Lord. And may the Lord bless you as you do.