

DARING TO DO THE DISCIPLINES
(Part Four)
"Study"

Adapted from Richard Foster in *Celebration Of Discipline* New York: HarperCollins 1978 / 98, p.p. 62 to 76.

Text: Philippians 4.8, 9 (in pew Bible p. 1163 / in large print Bible p. 1810).

Intro:

-the 40 days of Lent offer us an opportunity to be liberated from the suffocating pressure of our culture.

- various disciplines practiced during Lent to help prepare us to observe the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- for centuries, Christians have practiced Spiritual Disciplines in order to encounter God and find spiritual enrichment.

-part 4 of series "*Daring To Do The Disciplines.*"

- Spiritual Disciplines = transforming liberation of these helpful tools.
- Meditation (Psalm 119.97 – 104, 148) = transformational truth controls us.
- Prayer (Luke 11.1 - 4) = deepest & highest work in our human spirit.

-today's text reveals the pressing need for the Discipline of Study.

- final exhortations of Paul to the church at Philippi.
 - **think** = virtuous thoughts (v. 8).
 - **practice** = what leaders model (v. 9).
- result = peace of God will be with you (v. 9).
 - inscrutable peace of God guards our hearts and minds (v. 7).

-purpose of study = transformation of hearts & minds.

- replace old destructive habit with new life-giving habits.
- filters & screens input and secures godly peace and virtue.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to **test and approve** what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12.2).

Take Home Point:

-we're called to the discipline of study in order to experience God's blessing.

Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; **tie** them as symbols on your hands and **bind** them on your foreheads. **Teach** them to your children, **talking** about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. **Write** them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth (Deuteronomy 11.18 – 21).

1. IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

-what we study determines our habits.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is **true**, whatever is **noble**, whatever is **right**, whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **admirable**—if anything is **excellent** or praiseworthy—think about such things (Philippians 4.8).

-to study God's truth is the key to liberation.

Then Jesus said to those ... who believed Him, "If you **abide** in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall **know** the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8.31, 32).

-**illust.** Christian & Hopeful In Dungeon (*Pilgrim's Progress* pp. 128 – 134).

2. PATHWAYS TO STUDY

-Stepping Stone Of Repetition:

- channels the mind in a certain direction.
 - **illust.** Muscle Memory.
- ingrained habits are powerful.
 - in Old Testament godly leaders regularly rehearsed Salvation History.
 - in Old Testament the liturgical calendar of Festivals (Passover, Booths, Atonement, Tabernacles).
- Christian church calendar of major events:
 - Advent, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost.
- Christian ordinances of major experiences:
 - Infant Dedication, Believer's baptism, Communion, Christian burial.

-Stepping Stone Of Concentration:

- increases learning by centering the mind.
 - **illust.** Studying At University.
- routinely setting aside the distraction of our culture and meditating on God.
 - **illust.** Julia Roberts in "Eat Pray Love."

-Stepping Stone Of Comprehension:

- fruit of repetition and concentration = *eventually the light goes on*.
- truth doesn't set us free but knowledge of the truth (John 8.31, 32).
 - enables us to evaluate the significance of what we study.
 - enables us to understand ourselves.

Conclusion:

1. Know what God wants.

-there is a desperate need today, not for Christians to be more intelligent or gifted but for Christians to be deeper and more genuine.

- to do this is to practice the Spiritual Disciplines.
- Spiritual Disciplines are tools which help us to reach above the physical world to enter deep spiritual life.

-say “yes” to God’s dare to the Spiritual Disciplines!

- we’re called to the discipline of study in order to experience God’s blessing.
 - liberates & transforms hearts & minds.
 - replaces old destructive habit with new life-giving habits.
 - filters & screens input and secures godly peace and virtue.

2. Know how to do what God wants.

-avail yourself of verbal and non-verbal books.

- printed books & lectures / nature & human interaction.

-study until you understand, interpret the meaning, and evaluate right or wrong.

- follow this sequence – evaluate in light of other experiences, books & discussion.
- process with others – meal times & coffee times.
 - **illust.** David Suzuki’s daughter on CBC news for his 75th birthday.

-most important book of study = Bible & most important person to study = Jesus.

- promote S.S. for children / Lent Study & other adult studies.
- be hearers & doers of the Word so that you are not deceived (James 1.23).
- pray for help / think virtuous thoughts / practice what leaders model.

How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.
I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.
I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you (Psalm 119.9 – 11).

All **Scripture** is inspired by God and is useful to **teach** us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It **corrects** us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to **prepare and equip** his people to do every good work (2 Timothy 3.16, 17).

... devote yourself to the **public reading** of Scripture ... Be **diligent** in these matters; **give yourself wholly** to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and **doctrine** closely. **Persevere** in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (1 Timothy 4.13 - 16).

3. Know that you will do it.

-**Closing Hymn:** O For A Closer Walk With God (all verses).