

Disciplines Of Love

Who We Are: August 16

I. Opening Prayer

- Ask the Holy Spirit to help your group learn and hear what He would teach and encourage

II. Weekly Sermon Discussion (20-40 minutes)

- Read the scriptures, and discuss what stood out to you.
- Engage with one another by reflecting and sharing what our Church is learning together.
- Example insights and questions are provided to help generate discussion if needed.

Focus your conversation on the scripture and how it applies to you. Be careful of straying off the topic, and if you do, encourage one another to ask “How does this scripture apply to this?”.

Discipline is the Language of Love

Read: John 14:15, Matthew 22:36-40, 2 Cor 5:15, Prov 3:12

Discipline comes from the Latin word *discipulus*, which means “learner” or “pupil”. It’s the same word we get ‘Disciple’ from. You can’t be a ‘Disciple without Discipline’. Discipline is not about punishment, it’s about training for transformation. The intentional practice of training your mind, character, and habits to follow Jesus as a disciple. Spiritual Disciplines are not about religion and rules, it’s about our ability to grow in relationship and wisdom.

- Religious perspective: “I discipline myself and obey His rules so that God will love me”
- Relationship perspective: “God loves, so I discipline myself to enjoy relationship with Him”
- Think about a close relationship you have (spouse, best friend, family). What is a ‘discipline’ or habit that you practice to keep that relationship healthy (e.g., date night, calls, texting, shared interest)? How would that relationship suffer if you stopped that discipline?
- What do you think of when you think of the word ‘discipline’?
- How does shifting our mindset from "I have to do this to be a good Christian" (religion) to "I want to do this because I love Him" (relationship) change the way we view spiritual disciplines?
- Why is the intentional practices of these disciplines a matter of relationship and wisdom rather than a religious rule?

A Summary of Disciplines

Select some of these to discuss as a group

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| 1. Sabbath | Ex 20:8, Deut 5:15, Mark 2:27 |
| 2. Bible Ruminaton | Josh 1:8, Js 1:25, John 8:31-32 |
| 3. Prayer | Ps 27:8, Ps 139:23-24, Matt 6:5-15 |
| 4. Worship | Eph 5:17-19, Heb 12:28-29, Ps 66:1-2 |
| 5. Fasting | Phil 3:18-19, Job 23:12, Matt 6:16-18 |
| 6. Generosity | Phil 4:11-13, Matt 6:19-34, 2 Cor 9:7 |

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| 7. Fellowship | John 13:34-35, 1 John 1:1-7 |
| 8. Serve | John 13:12-17, 1 Pet 4:10, Luke 14:12-14 |
| 9. Discipleship | Matt 28:18-20, Acts 2:42-47 |

- How are you doing with these spiritual disciplines? Rank each one.
- Which ones do you struggle with the most? Why?
- Share with the group what the impact of a discipline has had on your life?
- What practical action can you take this week to grow in discipline?
- How can your group support one another in growing in spiritual disciplines?

III. Share & Prayer (20-40 minutes)

Time to 'take off the mask'! Jesus doesn't want us to be hypocrites who wear masks.

- A personal life update, your current spiritual condition. Use emotional language to be real!
- Challenges or victories that you are experiencing
- What's really going on in your life? How are you doing? How can your group pray for you?
- Are there applications from the Discussion that you need prayer support?
- How can your Group support you this week?

When sharing prayer requests, include your personal prayer needs. Example – rather than simply sharing “Please pray for my friend’s cancer journey”, include personal prayer: “Please pray as I’m struggling with my friend’s cancer journey, and I need guidance on how to encourage her in this season”.

Have someone, or everyone, close your time out in prayer for one another.

Family Discipleship Idea

The "Disciplines of Love"

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments." — John 14:15 (ESV)

What is Discipline?

Have you ever noticed that if you leave a backyard completely alone, it doesn't automatically turn into a beautiful garden full of watermelons and strawberries? It turns into a patch of weeds and thorns.

Our hearts and our lives are the exact same way. If we don't intentionally take care of them, we get lazy, grumpy, and selfish. To get a beautiful garden, a farmer has to discipline the ground. They pull out the rocks, chop down the weeds, and water the dirt.

A lot of people think the word discipline means getting in trouble or getting punished. But that is wrong! Punishment looks backward at a mistake you already made. Discipline looks forward at the person you are becoming.

Discipline comes from a word that means 'learning to be a follower.' It means choosing what you want most over what you want right now. It is training your mind, your body, and your heart to grow.

When Jesus said, 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments,' He was telling us that discipline is the language of love. We don't do hard things to make God love us; we do them because we already love Him and want to be close to Him!

Why We Need Discipline in ALL of Life

"What happens if a soccer player never shows up to practice and only eats candy? Will they be good at the game? What happens if a musician never practices the piano?"

We have to embrace discipline in every single part of our lives if we want to grow up strong, capable, and happy.

- In School & Mind: We discipline ourselves to do homework before playing video games so we can become wise and smart.
- In Sports & Health: We discipline our bodies by eating healthy food and practicing drills so we can run fast and stay strong.
- At Home & Relationships: We discipline our words by stopping ourselves from shouting when we are angry, which protects our family peace.

If we need discipline to be good at soccer, school, or music, we need it even more in our relationship with God. Our daily habits are like a shovel. Every time we pray, read the Bible, or serve others, we are shoveling the rocks and weeds out of our hearts so God's love can grow huge inside us.

7 "Love Language" Disciplines

Practicing spiritual disciplines is just our way of speaking God's love language. Look at these practical, kid-friendly challenges and pick one or two to try as a family this week:

1. The "Stop & Celebrate" Game (Sabbath)
 - What it is: Training our hearts to trust God by stopping our work.
 - Kid Challenge: Pick an hour this weekend where all phones, tablets, video games, and chores completely stop. Bake a treat together, play a board game, or go to the park. Use that hour to look around and say, "Thank you, God, for making our family!"
2. "Chew the Cud" (Bible Rumination)
 - What it is: Eating God's Word like food and thinking about it all day.
 - Kid Challenge: Write a short verse (like John 14:15) on an index card and tape it to the refrigerator door or the bathroom mirror. Every time a family member opens the fridge or brushes their teeth, they have to say the verse out loud. By the end of the week, it will be hidden inside your heart!
3. The "Secret Agent" Mission (Serving)
 - What it is: Training our hands to look like Jesus, who washed His disciples' feet.
 - Kid Challenge: Everyone in the family gets assigned a "Secret Target" (another family member or a neighbor). Your mission is to do one helpful chore for them this week without letting them catch you (like making their bed, picking up their toys, or raking leaves).
4. The Distraction Fast (Fasting)
 - What it is: Saying "no" to earthly things so we can say a bigger "yes" to God.
 - Kid Challenge: Pick one dinner or one entire evening to go completely "screen-free"—no TVs, no phones, no iPad games. Instead, use that time to talk face-to-face, ask each other questions, and pray together before bed.
5. The "Give It Away" Box (Generosity)
 - What it is: Training our hearts to remember that God owns everything we have.
 - Kid Challenge: Put a big empty box in the living room. Have every family member go through their rooms and find one or two really good toys or clothes that they love, but are willing to give away to children who don't have any.
6. The "First Fruits" Hello (Prayer)
 - What it is: Giving God our attention before anything else catches our eye.
 - Kid Challenge: Before anyone looks at a phone, turns on a screen, or starts talking in the morning, roll out of bed and say this simple 5-second prayer: "Good morning, Lord! This is Your day. I am Your child. Lead me in Your way."
7. The Joy Blast (Worship)
 - What it is: Filling our hearts with holy fear, awe, and happiness through song.
 - Kid Challenge: Turn off the regular radio in the car or the house and turn on a high-energy Christian worship playlist. Have a 5-minute dance party or a sing-along where everyone lifts their hands and gives God their highest praise.

"Dear Lord, thank You that You love us too much to let us stay stuck in the weeds. Help us to love discipline and not run away from it. Give us the strength to train our bodies, minds, and hearts every day. Most of all, help us use these habits to grow closer to You. In Jesus name we pray, Amen."