

Spiritual Disciplines Will Help Me Change

Message 03 of the series "Changing for the Better"

I. God wants me to change for the better this year.

"So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding." Hebrews 6:1 (NLT)

"May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you." 1 Thessalonians 3:12 (NIV)

"The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:8 (NLT)

II. I will change for the better if I choose to adopt some spiritual disciplines.

"Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit." Galatians 6:7-8 (NLT)

"We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin... Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God... Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living." Romans 6:6-7,12-13,16 (NLT)

a. I can choose to adopt disciplines that will help me say "NO" to sinful desires.

- I can honestly evaluate my weaknesses and flee situations that entice me to sin.

"Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does." 1 Corinthians 6:18 (NLT)

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness." 1 Timothy 6:10-11 (NIV)

"God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. So, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols."

1 Corinthians 10:13-14 (NLT)

- I can intentionally deny my fleshly desires and practice self-control through fasting regularly.

"I discipline (buffet) my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified." 1 Corinthians 9:27 (NLT)

b. I can choose to adopt disciplines that will help me say "YES" to the Holy Spirit's desires.

"When an evil spirit leaves a person, it goes into the desert, searching for rest. But when it finds none, it says, 'I will return to the person I came from.' So it returns and finds that its former home is all swept and in order. Then the spirit finds seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they all enter the person and live there. And so that person is worse off than before." Luke 11:24-26 (NLT)

"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." Galatians 5:16 (NIV)

- I can schedule time to meditate on Scripture everyday.

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers." Psalm 1:1-3 (NIV)

- I can schedule time to pray everyday.

"I love the LORD because he hears my voice and my prayer for mercy. Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!" Psalm 116:1-2 (NLT)

"My heart has heard you say, 'Come and talk with me.' And my heart responds, 'LORD, I am coming.'"

Psalm 27:8 (NLT)

- I can meet with a small group of Christian friends weekly.

“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.” Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)

- I can gather with Christians to worship God weekly.

“Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth! Worship the LORD with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the LORD is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.” Psalm 100:1-5 (NLT)

- I can volunteer to serve others regularly.

“Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon. The LORD will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring.” Isaiah 58:10-11 (NLT)

**** WARNING **** Spiritual disciplines practiced with the wrong motives are spiritually deadly.

“Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven... When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them... And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get.” Matthew 6:1,5,16 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions

1. Share a new years resolution you made but never did anything about.
2. Why is it so easy to know what you need to change but so difficult to make those changes?
3. Have you ever considered fasting? What hinders us from fasting and spending solitude time with God? If you could find the time, would you spend a day fasting?
4. Read Galatians 6:7-8. Is what you are harvesting in your life what you want? What are some areas of your life that you believe God wants to see changed? How do you start planting for different results?
5. Read Ephesians 4:17-32. What will change our thoughts and inner attitude? Why does Paul speak so pointedly about changing what comes out of our mouths?
6. Read Romans 6:4-14. What do you see from this passage about the power of sin in your life? How does this knowledge of your life in Christ impact your ability to live a changed life?
7. Write down three things that you know God wants to see changed in your life. List how these changes will impact your life. What spiritual disciplines are required to see the desired changes become reality?

Quotations to consider:

“Now, with God’s help, I shall become myself.” Søren Kierkegaard

“If you are weary of some sleepy form of devotion, probably God is as weary of it as you are.” Frank Laubauch

“Spirituality” wrongly understood or pursued is a major source of human misery and rebellion against God.” Dallas Willard

“Woe to those weak and timid souls who are divided between God and their world! They want and they do not want. They are torn by remorse and desire at the same time... They have a horror of evil and a shame of good. They have the pains of virtue without tasting its sweet consolations. Oh how wretched they are.” François Fenelon