

THE DISCIPLINE OF CREATION

Reminder

We are surrounded by sacred things. Knowledge of the invisible God is revealed by contemplating His visible creation. When we watch a sunset disappear over the horizon, lilies sway in a field, or baby ducks paddle for all they're worth to keep up with mama duck, we also get a glimpse of God. Whether you focus on natural beauty, man-made beauty, or mankind's beauty, let the result be the same—let it propel your mind to meditate on the greatness and goodness of the holy God.

Examples and Suggestions

For me, few things crack through the shell as much as the majesty of His creation. When I'm hiking or camping, surrounded by nature, it's a spiritual experience. This worldly shell just shatters into a thousand tiny pieces, and my temporal worries give way to an eternal perspective. I average about four days a month.

There are so many ways to take in the majesty of His creation. You can go for a walk along a mountain stream or next to an ocean, sit in a lawn chair under the stars, wake up early for the sunrise, or whatever else helps you reflect on your Creator. Ponder God, and exult Him with the praise, glory, and honor that He alone is worthy to receive. Now you try it. Write down the actions you are taking, or want to take, to experience God in creation.

Your Action Plan

THE DISCIPLINE OF SCRIPTURE

Reminder

Would a God powerful enough to inspire the Bible to be written not also be powerful enough to preserve it? The Bible exists to bring us to faith (justification, or salvation), and to help us become more and more like Christ (sanctification, or holiness). Think of the Bible as Google Maps for your soul.

If you believe the Bible is God's Word, doesn't it make sense that you'd want to read it? Personally, I have never known a man whose life changed in any significant way apart from the regular study of God's Word.

Examples and Suggestions

I have one overarching goal—to read the Bible from cover to cover each year. I found a plan that works for me, with assigned portions for five days of every week. I'm not legalistic about it. I don't micromanage or fret about whether I'm exactly on schedule. I just know that by the end of the year, I will read through the entire Bible. I'm in my thirty-sixth year of doing that. Here are seven suggestions from the chapter:

- Read through the Bible once a year.
- Set a regular time for daily Bible reading and study.
- Meditate on and memorize Scripture.
- Apply Scripture to real-life situations.
- Keep a journal of spiritual insights.
- Meet with other Christians to study the Bible.
- Listen to sermons.

Your Action Plan

THE DISCIPLINE OF WORSHIP

Review

Your soul's deepest hunger is to worship its Creator. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for worship means "to bow down or to prostrate yourself." In the New Testament, the Greek word for worship means "to kiss, the way a dog licks its master's hand."

Worship includes any activity that enhances or expresses your understanding of God's supremacy and your submission to Him. You can worship in public or in private. Make worship the first habit of your heart. Go through your day seeking opportunities to worship God. Consciously think about how you can have more gratitude for who God is, what He has done, and for His gracious, loving provision.

Examples and Suggestions

Worshiping God through all the disciplines is my overarching goal. I start most days with time to read, pray, meditate, send texts of encouragement, and journal. Good sermons, praying with my wife, and doing my work with excellence all put me in a worshipful state of mind.

Your Action Plan

Write specific steps you are taking, or would like to take, to worship God more thoroughly. As appropriate, incorporate any or all of the five worship suggestions in the chapter: preparation, books, music, family worship, and work.

THE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER

Reminder

Prayer is a conversation intended to turn your salvation into a close communion and intimate relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Men who pray a lot make prayer a priority because they see it as the most powerful and efficient use of their time. Don't be misled: prayer is more powerful than labor, which is why God had to put limits around it—or we would destroy ourselves. Make a plan. If you don't plan to pray regularly, you won't.

Examples and Suggestions

“Rote prayers and rabbit trails”—that's my method. One of my rote prayers is the Lord's Prayer. I might stop at the phrase, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Then I remember a need and wander down that rabbit trail for four or five minutes before I return to the prayer. Have some set prayers that are important to you, but then allow the Holy Spirit to trigger different thoughts based on those prayers.

Your Action Plan

Describe your plan for a quiet time that includes prayer, any repetitive prayers you want to pray, and how you will pray regularly with your wife (if married) or an accountability partner.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SABBATH

Reminder

God made it legal for you to set apart one day a week for rest. Through the creation ordinances, God originated the idea of a seven-day week, with one day set aside for rest. Thank God for the Sabbath and think about this as a special day in God's economy. We all have a responsibility, but also a right or privilege, to enjoy regular intervals of rest. If you don't honor the Sabbath and find your rest in Him, if you don't invest any time celebrating your place in God's family, you will succumb to stress—and usually at the worst possible moment.

Examples and Suggestions

Prepare for church in a different way. Possibly include your family. Spend some amount of time in Sabbath every day. You are probably already doing this—a quiet cup of coffee in the morning, debriefing your day with your spouse, or taking a midday nap. It may be as simple as thinking differently about something you are already doing. If you work at physical labor all week, then perhaps Sunday (or whatever day you take as your Sabbath) is a good day to take a nap.

Your Action Plan

THE DISCIPLINE OF A SMALL GROUP

Reminder

Like redwoods, we will find it's easier to stand strong when we stand together. God designed us that way on purpose, so that we need each other to survive and thrive. In His wisdom God has not given any of us everything we need to follow Him successfully. Instead He chose to give us each other. We all have different parts to play in this body. How do I know that Jesus is alive? Because I see Him in you. How do I know that Jesus really loves me? Because you really love me. Search out friends who will give you a needed kick in the pants through exhortation, or who will comfort and strengthen you when you need a drink of encouragement.

Examples and Suggestions

Using the Discussion Leader's Guide at the end of this book, start a small group to meet in your home one morning or evening per week. While being careful not to come on too strong too soon, plant the idea that your group continue to meet. You can study the Bible, men's discipleship books and workbooks, or do both and switch it up from time to time.

Not ready to lead? Ask around and see what kind of men's small groups are available in your church. Ask if you can visit one without obligation, to observe for a few weeks before you commit to join.

Another option: Ask three men to take the Three-Week Accountability Challenge. Find three men with whom you think you are compatible. Read and discuss the article "How to Have an Accountable Relationship," available by using the search window at www.maninthemirror.org.

Your Action Plan

THE DISCIPLINE OF COUNSEL

Reminder

Most people do not want counsel—they want permission. To effectively seek counsel, we must settle the heart issues first. We must be humble enough to admit we don't have all the answers. Ask yourself, "Do I really want to make a wise decision, or do I just want to have my own way?" That's important because the price of going your own way is getting your own way. A major goal for the spiritual discipline of counsel is to distinguish between human ingenuity and God's wisdom.

Examples and Suggestions

Here are questions that can help you seek the best counsel:

1. "Am I trying to make a moral decision or a priority decision?"
2. "Am I looking for advice or permission?"
3. "Who can help me decide if this is an opportunity or a distraction?"
4. "Do I need counsel that's the voice of reason or the voice of passion?"
5. "Who will really listen and understand my issue before offering advice?"
6. "Who can I trust is for me and doesn't have their own agenda?"
7. "Am I sending the right signals that I am open to advice?"
8. "Do I have peace?"

Your Action Plan

What do you need counsel for right now? Who can best provide advice? Which of the eight suggestions do you want to act on?

THE DISCIPLINE OF FASTING

Reminder

Fasting gives us an opportunity to satisfy our spiritual appetite by sacrificing our physical appetite. Fasting involves giving up something you normally do, for the purpose of focusing more time and attention on God. Fasting allows you to express sorrow and penitence. Fasting strengthens your prayer life. Fasting allows you to express love to God in a tangible way. If you never sacrifice anything for Jesus, how can either of you be truly sure that you love Him?

Examples and Suggestions

Throughout the Bible men fasted, including Moses, David, Nehemiah, Ezra, Samuel, Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Nehemiah, Zechariah, John the Baptist, Paul, and Jesus.

I don't see any magic formula for fasting, but if you've never tried this before, you might want to skip one meal and see what happens. If you intend to fast for longer than a day, you should skip heavy exercise and maybe do a little walking instead. Some people take in nothing but water. Others drink juice as well to keep their energy levels constant with the intake of carbs. I don't think most men can reasonably expect to maintain a normal schedule without some glucose. I drink a couple of protein shakes during the day. If you get tired, take a nap. Maybe that's the body saying you need to rest. When you fast, spend the time you normally would consume food to read the Bible and pray. Try it for one or two meals, then decide if you want to establish your own discipline of fasting.

Your Action Plan

THE DISCIPLINE OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Reminder

You already know this, but there is a titanic battle raging inside you for control of your thoughts, emotions, and actions. Your battle is against three spiritual enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Fortunately for you, you don't have to wage this war alone. The Holy Spirit adds a fourth superpower to the war, and He is infinitely stronger than all your enemies combined.

Examples and Suggestions

- Don't feed your temptations.
- Half of my readers struggle with something that is absolutely consuming them. Most of you can see victory if you will engage with a trustworthy community.
- Put on the full armor of God.
- Walk in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Know what to do when you lose a battle.

Your Action Plan

THE DISCIPLINE OF STEWARDSHIP

Reminder

It's true that stewardship is about money, but it's not *only* about money. In fact, tithing isn't even the starting point for how God wants you to manage your life. God has entrusted you with an enormous amount of time, talent, and treasure. Everything we have comes from God and belongs to God. And what does God require of us in return? It's to be found faithful. The question on the final example will not be, "Were you *successful*?" The question will be, "Were you *faithful*?" Stewardship is the inevitable lifestyle of an authentic Christian. A faithful steward devotes 100 percent of his time, talent, and treasure to God's glory.

Examples and Suggestions

1. Don't get engrossed with your possessions.
2. Take care of the possessions you have.
3. Provide for the future.
4. Give 10 percent of your income to the work of the church.
5. Give above a tithe as God blesses and as you feel led.
6. Steward your own private life.
7. Steward your family.

Your Action Plan

Write down anything you want to do to be a more faithful steward with:

- Your time: _____
- Your talent: _____
- Your treasure: _____

THE DISCIPLINE OF SERVICE

Reminder

Jesus calls us to have the mindset of a servant. A servant is someone who goes where Jesus would go to do what Jesus would do. The chief test of a servant is whether or not you are willing to be treated like one.

When we have settled the issue of who we are and who He is, our natural response will be like Isaiah's: "Here I am. Send me!" Bring yourself to Jesus, and in due time you will find yourself inspired to serve. Whether God leads you to fight for your country or humbly serve others, one of the greatest proofs that you are Jesus' disciple is that you bear much fruit.

Examples and Suggestions

Because service breaks out wherever neighbor-love sees a need, its expressions are as boundless as our imaginations. Beyond the church walls, serving could be taking a shift for a coworker so he can visit a gravely ill grandparent, running an errand for someone who gets paid to run errands for you, taking meals to needy families (great to do with your children), providing transportation for someone whose car breaks down, feeding pets and watering plants for vacationing neighbors, and hardest of all, having a servant's heart in your own home. Serving is as commonplace as the practical needs it seeks to meet.

Your Action Plan

THE DISCIPLINE OF WITNESSING

Reminder

If we see men in any way other than how God sees them, we may miss our moment to help them. Today millions of men in America and around the world woke up ready to hear a credible explanation of how Christian faith could change their futile lives. Most of these men will go to bed tonight without getting one. Witnessing is simply taking someone as far as they want to go toward Jesus at that moment.

Examples and Suggestions

Pray. Ask God for opportunities to meet with men who want to discuss their spiritual journeys.

Make an appointment. Take the men God puts on your heart to breakfast, lunch, or for coffee.

Listen. Ask a man, "Where are you on your spiritual journey?"

Share your testimony. Take three minutes to share what you were like before Christ, how you came to faith, and what has changed as a result.

Explain how to receive Christ. Share the Scriptures. You can use the ones in the chapter. Then, offer him an opportunity to pray and give his life to Jesus.

Your Action Plan

Think of the men you know who need God. Write down a next step for each man.

THE DISCIPLINE OF _____

Reminder

Your Action Plan

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