

# S.O.F.T. SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES THAT DISPLAY AND GROW FAITH

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## INTRO

One of the greatest needs of the Christian Faith is walking and growing in the ways of the spiritual life. So many people have “believed” Christ, but we sometimes wonder whether that belief is a practical “trust” in who He says He is. There are certain things we need to DO that help us grow in faith and show that we have faith. This is a process. We will be looking at a few spiritual disciplines that help the process and manifest the Christian Life.

## INTRODUCTORY QUOTES (1)

### St. Augustine

*“Thou Hast Formed Us For Thyself, And Our Hearts Are Restless Till They Find Rest In Thee.”*

### St. Bernard

*“We taste Thee, O Thou Living Bread, And long to feast upon Thee still: We drink of Thee, the Fountainhead And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.”*

### Faber

*“Only to sit and think of God, Oh what a joy it is! To think the thought, to breathe the Name; Earth has no higher bliss. Father of Jesus, love's reward! What rapture will it be, Prostrate before Thy throne to lie, And gaze and gaze on Thee!”*

### Thomas à Kempis

*“I had rather exercise faith than know the definition thereof.”*

### Michael Angelo

*“My unassisted heart is barren clay, That of its native self can nothing feed: Of good and pious works Thou art the seed, That quickens only where Thou sayest it may: Unless Thou show to us Thine own true way No man can find it: Father! Thou must lead.”*

### Rev James Synder

*“It is easy to go along with the crowd, but the one who is committed to living the crucified life will always lean hard into the wind of opposition and misunderstanding.”*

### Martyn Lloyd-Jones

*“The most vital question to ask about all who claim to be Christian is this: Have they a soul thirsty for God?...Is their life centered on Him? Do they press forward more and more that they might know Him?”*

### John Piper

*“The key to Christian living is a thirst and hunger for God. And one of the main reasons people do not understand or experience the sovereignty of grace and the way it works through the awakening of sovereign joy, is that their hunger and thirst for God is so small.”*

## **A. W. Tozer**

*“The man who has God for his treasure has all things in One. Many ordinary treasures may be denied him, or if he is allowed to have them, the enjoyment of them will be so tempered that they will never be necessary to his happiness. Or if he must see them go, one after one, he will scarcely feel a sense of loss, for having the Source of all things he has in One all satisfaction, all pleasure, all delight.”*

## **INTRODUCTORY QUOTES (2)**

### **Psalms 34:10**

*The young lions lack and suffer hunger;  
But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.*

### **Psalms 42:1-2**

*As the deer pants for the water brooks,  
So pants my soul for You, O God.  
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When shall I come and appear before God?*

TO GROW IN GOD AND IN THE WAYS OF GOD, WE NEED SOFT HEARTS THAT RESPOND QUICKLY AND EASILY TO GOD. WE WILL BE LOOKING AT 4 DISCIPLINES THAT SOFTEN THE HEART AND RELEASE GRACE TO THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVER. HERE IS THE ACRONYM FOR S.O.F.T.

1. **S** = STUDY
  2. **O** = OBEDIENCE
  3. **F** = FASTING WITH PRAYER
  4. **T** = TESTIFY
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## **1. STUDY**

Personal Bible Studies and Personal Studies of edifying Christian literature are required disciplines that fan the flame of revival and spiritual growth. A heart that is hungry for God invests quality time in study. One of the greatest battles you will fight is the battle to maintain a consistent life of quiet study of God’s Word or other edifying materials. For those who are unable to read, listening to audio readings can be taken as part of the discipline of study.

For personal Bible studies, as much as possible, it should have the following qualities:

- Systematic
- Focused
- Time-bound
- Prayerful
- Private

## LEARNING PRECEDES OBEDIENCE

### **Deuteronomy 5:1**

*And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them."*

## GROW IN GOD BY RECEIVING & MEMORIZING HIS INSTRUCTIONS

### **Job 22:21-22**

*Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace; Thereby good will come to you. Receive, please, instruction from His mouth, And lay up His words in your heart.*

## LEARN SCRIPTURES AND BE THOROUGHLY EQUIPPED

### **2 Timothy 3:14-17**

*But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

## YOU ARE YOUR THOUGHTS; AND WHAT YOU STUDY SHAPES YOUR THOUGHTS

### **Proverbs 23:7**

*For as he thinks in his heart, so is he...*

## STUDY REQUIRES QUIETNESS

### **1 Thessalonians 4:10-11 (KJV)**

*And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;*

## STUDY EQUIPS YOU & DELIVERS YOU FROM SHAME

### **2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)**

*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

## STUDY IS HARD WORK

### **2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV)**

*Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.*

## **2. OBEDIENCE**

Obedience is a spiritual discipline. For those who want to consistently walk with and grow in Christ, obeying Christ and His world is not an option. As you grow in the grace of obedience, there will be released to you, more grace to love and fellowship with Christ. Repeated disobedience will always truncate the spiritual growth of any believer.

## THE EFFECTS OF OBEDIENCE AND DISOBEDIENCE

### **Deuteronomy 11:26-28**

*Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.*

## FINAL EVIDENCE OF THE GOD LIFE IS OBEDIENCE

### **Ecclesiastes 12:13**

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.*

## OBEDIENCE MANIFESTS

### **Romans 16:19**

*For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.*

## FULL OBEDIENCE IS REQUIRED

### **2 Corinthians 10:4-6**

*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.*

## **3. FASTING & PRAYER**

Fasting is the deliberate and intentional denying of legitimate pleasures, for the sole purpose of gaining spiritual discipline. Fasting must be accompanied with prayer for it to be a meaningful fast. Fasting times and duration should be flexible and should be determined by the individual. Do not fast in such a way that you are unable to pray because of the strain of the fast. If the fast becomes too distracting, stop the fast and simply pray. However, growing in the discipline is fasting has great benefits and is a practice that opens up spiritual graces to the pilgrim.

## HOW, NOT WHEN TO FAST

### **Matthew 6:17-18**

*But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*

## SOME CHALLENGES REQUIRE FASTING AND PRAYER

### **Matthew 17:21**

*However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.*

## QUIET PRAYER, PRAYED ALONE, HAS POWER

### **Matthew 14:23**

*And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.*

## REGULAR MEDITATIVE PRAYER SHARPENS PERCEPTION & KEEPS YOU SENSITIVE & CENTERED ON GOD'S WILL

### **John 6:15**

*Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.*

## **4. TESTIFY**

Do not be silent. Sharing your life and your testimonies is a powerful way to grow in grace. People who have experienced God's grace and have remained silent, have also become stunted in their walk with God. Whenever you dare to speak up and share your life story and experience with others, it amplifies grace in your life. Silence is a grace killer.

## TESTIFY OF WHAT YOU KNOW AND HAVE EXPERIENCED

### **John 3:11**

*Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.*

## TESTIFYING IS A RESPONSE TO A COMMANDMENT

### **Acts 10:42**

*And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.*

## TESTIFY GENUINELY, IN THE LORD

### **Ephesians 4:17**

*This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,*

## **CONCLUSIONS**

### **A.W. TOZER**

*"To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love, scorned indeed by the too-easily-satisfied religionist, but justified in happy experience by the children of the burning heart. Come near to the holy men and women of the past and you will soon feel the heat of their desire after God. They mourned for Him, they prayed and wrestled and sought for Him day and night, in season and out, and when they had found Him the finding was all the sweeter for the long seeking."*

## **5-POINT CONCLUSION**

*1. We keep pursuing God because of who He is and what He means to us. We pursue in love and humility. Growth in grace is a result of a heart pursuit. The spiritual disciplines are not mechanical buttons that suddenly release heavenly grace. The motivation and the expectation around which the disciplines are practiced are also vital for the functioning as God's channels for growth and grace.*

*2. It is the man that is hungry to grow in God that seek God in these disciplines. A man who has no appetite for God will never endear himself to these. So one way to check if you are growing in God is in how much of these S.O.F.T. disciplines you are practicing and growing in.*

*3. These disciplines grow and even if you are not perfect in them (none of us really are!), keeping pressing in and checking yourself against them. Do not give up practicing these disciplines.*

*4. We cannot practice any of them or grow in them without the help of God. It is the Holy Spirit working in us and through us that will grow these disciplines. We need to therefore earnestly and repeatedly seek the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to practice these and grow in them.*

*5. Get an accountability partner. Get someone with whom you can share your journey, your struggles, and your victories in walking with God and in practicing these disciplines. Remember that you may not succeed in always practicing all of them, but your accountability partner will keep reminding you and encouraging you to keep trying. So get a partner.*

*In conclusion, these 4 S.O.F.T. disciplines mentioned above are just introductions. There are several other spiritual disciplines that grow the Christian faith. These will include but are not limited to the disciplines of Giving, Meditation, Service, Forgiveness, Community, Self-Denial, Sacrifice, Humility and so forth. To encourage your spiritual pilgrimage, I strongly recommend the following listed books and authors below for your personal study.*

*Thank you!*

## **RECOMMENDED READING**

1. A.W. Tozer, THE PURSUIT OF GOD
2. Bob Sorge, SECRETS OF THE SECRET PLACE
3. James Smith: YOU ARE WHAT YOU LOVE
4. Dallas Willard: THE SPIRIT OF THE DISCIPLINES
5. Richard Foster: CELEBRATION OF DISCIPLINE

**\*NOTICE:** You can also receive several audio messages and devotional writing for your spiritual growth on my website: [www.restlesspilgrim.org](http://www.restlesspilgrim.org)