



Prayer and Fasting ~ February 3, 2019

OPEN

Today we are beginning a series of sermons about “spiritual disciplines” which provide “First Aid For The Soul”. You see, spiritual disciplines are not punishments! Ideally, spiritual disciplines are proactive, helping us get ready for the rigors of our spiritual journey. Often they are also practices which restore us. In both cases they position us for God’s transformative power. A spiritual discipline is a practice that enhances spiritual vitality.

A coach is someone who tells you what you don't want to hear, who has you see what you don't want to see, so you can be who you have always known you could be.
~ Tom Landry

*The Spirit of the Disciplines is nothing but the love of Jesus,
with its resolute will to be like him whom we love.*
~ Dallas Willard

The classical disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths. They invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm.... God has ordained the disciplines of the spiritual life as the means by which we place ourselves where he can bless us.
~ Richard Foster

DIG

As Christ-followers, if we are going to make spiritual progress we will need discipline. Read what Paul said about discipline in I Corinthians 9:24-27.

At the core of prayer is **A** _____ – read Hebrews 4:14-16 to see the way Jesus has provided for us to come into the presence of God with our petitions.

- **Prayer** - **engaging with God through speaking and listening**
Prayer is nothing more than an ongoing and growing love relationship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
~ Richard Foster
- **Fasting** - **breaking from what fills us to be more fully engage with God**
*Fasting means a determined effort to put first things first,
even at the cost of some inconvenience to oneself.*
~ Amy Carmichael

Prayer is vast in its scope, covering all of our interaction with God. It cannot be reduced to rote or ritual. Similarly, fasting is broad. We can fast from food. But since the good things in our lives that distract us from God are many this means there are many things from which we can fast in order to focus on God.

We find a model of fasting and prayer in Nehemiah 1:1-11

Read carefully through this passage and consider the six elements that were present in Nehemiah’s practice of prayer and fasting.

1. **Context** - vv. 1-3, 11b
2. **Concern** - vv. 4-5
3. **Confession** - vv. 6-7
4. **Confidence** - vv. 8-10
5. **Compassion** - v. 11
6. **Conscious** - 2:4b

REFLECT

Do you feel distracted in prayer? Check the online article, “[Ways To Fight Distraction In Prayer](#).” Also, praying with others will also help us focus in prayer. What are the corporate prayer opportunities at Cornerstone?

- ✓ **Weekly** - Home Groups, Prayer Email List, Pre-service Prayer at 10 am
- ✓ **Monthly** - Concerts of Prayer, first Sunday of the month, 7 pm
- ✓ **Community** - 24/7 community prayer initiative; worship and prayer events

Here are some suggested books by Richard Foster about spiritual disciplines:

Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home & Celebration of Discipline

*Sometimes I wake with dark and quiet around me,
And swift across my vision, like a light
Flashes the face of one I know who suffers,
Or one whom sorrow newly touched last night
Perhaps, for just that moment and that purpose
There lacks a link in God’s great chain of prayer
So, lest the chain be weakened by my silence,
Or break because I fail to do my share
I shape the link and know the Spirit’s fire
Will forge it into place and weld it there
~ Annie Johnson Flint*