

Introduction to Spiritual Disciplines

- **Definition:** Spiritual disciplines are practices designed to promote spiritual growth in both individual and community contexts. These are the habits of devotion that have been integral to the lives of God's people since biblical times.
- **Purpose:** These disciplines are God-given tools to pursue godliness through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.
- **Scriptural Basis:**
 - **1 Timothy 4:7:** "But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness."
 - **Key Idea:** Spiritual disciplines help us cultivate a life that reflects God's character and priorities.

Focus on Bible Reading

- **Importance of Scripture:**
 - **1 Peter 2:2:** "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."
 - **Matthew 4:4:** "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."
 - **2 Timothy 3:16-17:** "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 perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."
- **Main Objectives:**
 - **What God Says About the Bible**
 - **How We Should Approach the Bible**
 - **How to Apply the Bible in Our Lives**

1. What God Says About the Bible

- **Inspiration and Authority:**
 - **Divine Inspiration:** The Bible is "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16), meaning it is directly from God and holds divine authority.

- **Written by Prophets of God.** The biblical authors were prophets and apostles of God
- **Inerrancy:** The Bible is without error Jesus' View of Scripture
 - **Divine Authority:** Jesus confirmed that the Bible is divinely authoritative, cannot be wrong, and will never be destroyed (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10).
 - **Old Testament Affirmation:** Jesus supported the Old Testament as God's Word and highlighted its importance for salvation (Matt. 5:17–18).
 - ¹Jesus affirmed the Old Testament to be the Word of God and promised to guide his disciples to know all truth. Jesus claimed for the Bible:
 - Divine authority—Matthew 4:4, 7, 10
 - Indestructibility—Matthew 5:17–18
 - Infallibility or unbreakability—John 10:35
 - Ultimate supremacy—Matthew 15:3, 6
 - Factual inerrancy—Matthew 22:29; John 17:17
 - Historical reliability—Matthew 12:40, 24:37–38
 - Scientific accuracy—Matthew 19:4–5; John 3:12
- **Comprehensive Authority:** The Bible governs all aspects of life and provides the ultimate standard for truth.
- **Key Characteristics of the Bible:**
 - **66 Books:** Covering various genres, written by over 40 authors from diverse backgrounds.
 - **1,500-Year Span:** Written across multiple continents in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.
 - ²**The Unity of the Bible:** The Bible's divine origin is evident in its remarkable unity despite its diversity. Written by around forty authors from various backgrounds over 1,400 years, the Bible comprises sixty-six books in Hebrew, Greek, and some Aramaic. It spans diverse literary styles, including history, poetry, parable, and prophecy.

Despite these differences, the Bible presents a unified story of redemption, from the fall of paradise to its restoration, with Jesus Christ as the central theme. The Old Testament anticipates Christ, while the New Testament reveals Him (Luke 24:27; Matt. 5:17–18). The core message is

¹ Geisler, Norman L. 1999. ["Bible, Evidence For."](#) In *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 93. Baker Reference Library. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

² Geisler, Norman L. 1999. ["Bible, Evidence For."](#) In *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 94. Baker Reference Library. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

that humanity's problem is sin, and the solution is salvation through Christ (Mark 10:45; Luke 19:10).

- **Verbal Plenary Inspiration:** Every word in the Bible is inspired by God.
 - **Matthew 5:17-18:** "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."
 - Each and every word, from cover to cover is inspired. Not thoughts but words are inspired.
 - ³*All Scripture, the entire Bible, is inspired and profitable. This is the extent of inspiration. The New Testament uses this word "Scripture" fifty-one times and always in reference to some part of the Bible.*
 - 1 Thessalonians 2:13
 - Paul describes his teachings as the word of God:
 - 2 Peter 3:15-16
 - Peter refers to Paul's letters as Scripture:
 - 1 Timothy 5:18
 - Paul quotes both the Old Testament and a New Testament text, calling them "Scripture":

2. How We Should Approach the Bible

- **Attitude Towards Scripture:**
 - **Pray, Pray, and Pray - Psalm 119:18**
 - **Approach with Expectation:** The Bible provides spiritual nourishment, guiding us in growth and maturity.
 - **Psalm 119:130:** "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."
 - **1 Corinthians 2:14:** "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."
 - **Seek Understanding and Guidance:** The Bible acts as a counselor and a light to your path.
 - **Psalm 119:24:** "Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors."
 - **Psalm 119:105:** "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

³ Ryrie, Charles Caldwell. 1999. Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

- **Embrace Correction and Purification:** The Bible corrects us and leads us to holiness.
 - **John 17:17:** "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
- **Enjoy the Sweetness of Scripture:** Like honey, God's Word is sweet and satisfying.
 - **Psalm 19:9-10:** "The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."

3. How to Apply the Bible in Our Lives

- **Scripture's Role in Our Lives:**
 - **Doctrine:** Knowing what's right according to God's truth.
 - **Reproof:** Recognizing what's not right and being convicted by it.
 - **Correction:** Learning how to get right with God.
 - **Instruction in Righteousness:** Understanding how to stay right with God and live a holy life.
 - **2 Timothy 3:17:** "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."—Perfect is complete, full maturation. "Thoroughly furnished" is fitted out for a life of every good work.
- **Practical Tips for Application:**
 - **Reflective Questions:**
 - Is there a promise to claim?
 - Is there a command to obey?
 - Is there a sin to avoid?
 - Is there a new thought to carry with me?
 - **Consider Literary Styles:** Understanding the Bible's genres—narrative, poetry, history, prophecy, letters—helps us interpret and apply its message.
 - History- Treat these books as detailed records of God's work with His people. Understand their context and apply their lessons to modern Christian life. (Genesis and Acts)
 - Poetry- Truth and statements presented as metaphors
 - Song of Solomon 4:2

- Complimenting someone's teeth by comparing them to sheep might be a unique way to say they have a nice smile
 - Epistles: Approach letters from the Apostles as instructions for Christian and Church living. Apply their doctrines and commands to your personal faith and church life.
 - Prophecy: We can see what is going to happen and also observe God's faithfulness to his promises. Keep in mind who the passage is written to.
 - **Contextual Awareness:** Knowing the historical and cultural context of a passage enriches understanding (e.g., author, audience, circumstances).
 - Understanding the Original Setting
 - Clarifying Ambiguities
 - Avoiding Misinterpretation
 - Recognizing Literary Forms
 - Applying Relevant Principles
- **Meditation and Memorization:**
 - **Meditate:** Reflect deeply on what you read, allowing it to shape your thoughts and actions.
 - Meditate: James 1:22-25
 - **Memorize:** Committing Scripture to memory helps you recall and meditate on God's Word throughout your day.
 - **Spiritual Nourishment:** Memorizing Scripture is vital for spiritual growth, as Jesus emphasized the importance of living by every word of God (Matthew 4:4).
 - **Sanctification:** Scripture memorization helps in sanctification, transforming us to be more like Christ (John 17:17).
 - **Understanding and Meditation:** Memorization deepens our understanding of Scripture, allowing for ongoing reflection and meditation.
 - **Combatting Temptation:** Memorized Scripture strengthens us against sin and temptation, acting as the "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17).
 - **Renewed Mind:** Constant engagement with Scripture renews our minds, shifting our worldview from secular to heavenly (Romans 12:2).
 - **Building the Church:** Memorized Scripture equips us to teach, encourage, and build up the Church effectively (Colossians 3:16).

- **Effective Evangelism:** Memorizing Scripture makes us more effective in sharing the gospel and answering questions about our faith (1 Peter 3:15).
- **Additional Benefits:** Provides comfort during trials, wisdom for counseling, heavenly-mindedness, and fruitful use of time.
- **Eternal Value:** Time spent memorizing and meditating on Scripture is eternally valuable, with no regrets on Judgment Day.

Closing Thoughts

- **Encouragement:**
 - **Quote from John Frame:** "The Bible is the written word of God and serves as the supreme constitution for His people."
 - **Final Charge:** Emphasize the transformative power of consistent Bible reading and application. Encourage participants to integrate these practices into their daily lives for ongoing spiritual growth and maturity.