

Spiritual Disciplines

Isaiah 61 Ministry has taught and preached about spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity means strengthening our spirits to soar with wings like an eagle. The five-fold ministry is in place to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. (Ephesians 4:11-12). The first thing we really must help the saints do is to move from the altar of salvation to a level of spiritual maturity where they can be useful to the Lord. Believers who are immature cannot be trained to do the work of the ministry. In fact, some are so immature that they hinder the ministry instead of helping to build it. So, let us discuss how each believer can attain perfection, that is attain maturity and strength in matters of the spirit.

First, you must be aware that spiritual strength and maturity does not happen by accident.

It happens on purpose.

It happens because something causes it to happen.

Just as a marathon runner does not get out of bed one day and run a marathon, neither does a Christian get up from the altar of salvation mature and strong in the spirit. A Christian gets up from the altar of salvation with a born-again spirit that is capable of soaring like an eagle.

The Lord gives power to the weak. And to those who have no might, He increases strength. Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like an eagle. Isaiah 40:29,31

What happens when my spirit is strong:

I know God more

I can hear God better

I can obey God

I have the character of God

My faith grows

I operate as Jesus did, in power and authority

I fly like an eagle

So, let's use a picture to understand maturity. When we are saved our spirit is born again. This is like getting a set of wings (don't write me and tell me I am off-base here, I know we do not have wings, this is just an illustration to make a point). The "wings" we get at salvation have everything necessary to soar.

As it says in Colossians 2:10:

And you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power

But, when we are first saved, we are like a baby bird. That baby bird has wings, but it cannot fly. Its wings are not strong enough. We are like that little bird, we must grow and become stronger or we will remain flightless, always in the nest, needing someone to feed us. Many Christians are flightless, having the ability to fly, but never getting off the ground. This is true for two reasons.

1. Lack of knowledge

They do not know they are even supposed to go on to perfection (flying like an eagle).

Hebrews 6:1 - Let us go on to perfection (maturity, completion)

Or they know they should go on to perfection, but they do not know how to do it.

Hosea 4:6 - My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.

2. Lack of Discipline

Of those Christians that have the knowledge of what they must do to go on to perfection, many lack the discipline to follow through. They just do not do it. This may be due to many reasons, such as distraction, laziness, need for deliverance, etc.

Let me paraphrase 1 Corinthians 9:24-27:

Paul said we must run our race in a way to receive the prize. Do not run with uncertainty, being doubleminded, starting and stopping and starting and stopping. Do not beat the air, using a lot of effort, but not accomplishing anything. Paul said we must discipline ourselves and bring ourselves under subjection.

Where are you? Have you grown spiritually since you got up from the altar of salvation? Have you moved on to perfection/maturity? Are you soaring like an eagle spiritually? Or have you remained flightless?

Today – Let us begin to know what we need to do to soar with the eagles.

Today – Let us make up our minds to do what is needed.

Let us deny ourselves and apply ourselves to do what it takes to move from the ground to the high places in God. To mount up as on wings of eagles.

Spiritual Disciplines

The Spiritual Disciplines are the means whereby God can grab hold of you and do what He needs to do to move you from the ground to the sky. If you apply these disciplines continually, regularly, every day, day in and day out, you will move on to perfection. Your spirit will become strong and take flight.

They are called Disciplines because it is easier not do them than to do them. It is easier to not exercise than to exercise. It is easier to eat unhealthily than to eat healthy. Do you see what I mean? It is easier to stay in the nest and let someone feed you than to do what it takes to strengthen your “wings” and leap out of that nest to take flight. But, it is worth it. Oh, how it is worth it! Once you fly, the nest and the ground will never satisfy you again.

These Disciplines that we will set forth now are the same disciplines that every mighty man and woman of God have applied to move from glory to glory, from level to level.

They are spiritual exercises.

There is no shortcut to strength and maturity.

No one makes it to the super bowl by accident. No one runs a marathon by accident.

No one makes it to the top with God by accident.

You must deny yourself and apply yourself. Or you might make heaven - But you will miss heaven on earth.

So, here they are: The Spiritual Disciplines

- The Discipline of the Word of God
- The Discipline Meditation and Solitude
- The Discipling of Prayer
- The Discipline of Fasting
- The Discipline of Worship
- The Discipline of Giving/Stewardship
- The Discipline of Service

These Disciplines are not our goal. They are a means to achieve our goal, which is soaring like an eagle onto:

Perfection – Completion – Maturity – Strength

We will take each of these Disciplines separately so that you can apply each in your life. God wants to use you, but you need to be focused and disciplined to achieve your destiny.

The first think you must do is to look at your schedule and determine how you can reallocate your time. If you will be honest, you will find that you are wasting some time every day that you can apply to strengthening your spirit.

Paul told Timothy that exercise was profitable, but that more profitable was godliness, which promises life now and more to come. What Paul is saying is that we should spend most of our time on what is most important. 1 Timothy 4:7-8

Can you take some time from TV, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. and use that time to do something profitable – useful to strengthen your spirit? If you can answer “yes” to this question, then you are on your way to a much deeper life with God.

This booklet is designed for you to take a Discipline a week and begin to weave that discipline into your daily life. You can read the booklet from start to finish at once, but then go back and

take each discipline separately – understand it and put it into practice. It will work better for you than trying to do it all at once. In this manner, you will have put in place new habits for an increased spiritual life by the time you get done with the entire booklet.

We have not set forth all that there is to say about Spiritual Disciplines in this booklet. This is simply a starting point to get you going and a refresher for what we have taught at Isaiah 61 Ministry. There are many excellent books on the Spiritual Disciplines and we suggest that you find one and dig deeper than we take you here. Having said this, let's get started.

The Discipline of the Word of God

We start here because this is the foundation of all the Disciplines. Without the Word of God, we are like a boat without a sail, drifting here and there without a way to steer our life.

Let me list a few of the reasons why we must spend daily time in the Word of God:

1. When you are in the Word – You are meeting with Jesus

The Bible says that: In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God. John 1:1

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

These two verses, taken together, make it very clear that Jesus Christ is the Word. So, when we are in the Word, reading the Word of God, we are actually spending time with Jesus.

If you want to grow closer to Jesus, hear His voice and know His voice – then you must spend more time with Him. One way you do this by spending time in the Word of God.

There are two Greek words for “Word”:

1. Logos is the Written Word of God. This is contained in your Bible. When you are reading your Bible, you are reading God's Logos Word. It is inspired and breathed by God. Look at what Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that a man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:15-16

This tells us that God's Word as written in Scripture (our Bible) is inspired by God. It is God's prophetic word to us. It also says if you want to be complete – perfect, mature – you get there by the Word of God.

2. Rhema is the revealed or spoken Word. This is also God breathed or inspired by God, but it is not confined to the written Scriptures. This is God speaking to His children as they hear His

voice, receive prophetic impartations and the like. This Word is also necessary to make you complete for every good work. But remember, every Rhema Word must be consistent with God's written Word and God's character.

2. When you are in the Word – You are being sanctified

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. John 17:17

Sanctify means to set apart for God, to make holy and to purify. When we become Christians, we no longer belong to ourselves. Remember:

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and you are not your own? For, you were bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

From the moment we get up from the altar of salvation, God is doing a work in us to bring us closer to Him and to make us more like Jesus. This is the process of sanctification. When we are first saved, our spirits are born again, but we do not act a whole lot like Jesus. However, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we are able to shed sin, self and the world and go from one level to another level – from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). God's Word is one of the Disciplines that takes us on this journey from salvation to perfection.

3. When you are in the Word – You are being set free

You shall know the truth and the truth will make you free. John 8:32

When the Son – the Word – makes you free you are free indeed. John 8:36

The Word of God has amazing qualities – it is powerful. It is alive. It is sharper than any two-edged sword.

For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thought and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

God's Word is powerful enough and sharp enough to look right into our heart and see what is in there. It is alive and can see our thoughts and motives. When God's Word pierces into our hearts, it shows us what God wants to deal with. When we fall into agreement with God, it brings freedom and deliverance in that area.

So, spending time in the Word is a time of revelation, healing, deliverance and freedom. It is a time where God takes us from one level of glory to another level of glory as He reveals areas where we do not look like Jesus and then transforms us. It is a time to spend with our Savior, Jesus Christ, getting to know Him, hearing His voice and responding to Him. It is a marvelous thing to be able to get away from the hustle and bustle of life and pick up the Bible to spend time in God's Word.

I would like challenge you to increase your time in God's Logos Word – the Bible, by 15 minutes per day. If you are reading the Bible 15 minutes per day, increase it to 30 minutes. If you are reading the Bible 30 minutes, make it 45 minutes. Start with the Gospels so you can see that Jesus practiced every Discipline that we are talking about. If you want to walk as Jesus walked, then do as Jesus did!

So, this is your assignment for one week, spending time you set aside to read your Bible, God's Word. Please don't take short cuts. This is your first week of putting new habits in place and it is very important to get started strong. Every day get your Bible and sit down and read it, for 15 minutes more than you normally do. Then, with each new Discipline, do not stop reading your Bible, keep doing it every day.

The Discipline of Meditation

We started with the Word of God because you can flow into meditation when you are in the Word. You can be reading your Bible and come upon a verse that intrigues you or jumps off the page at you. You stop and meditate on that Scripture.

What is Christian Meditation:

Let the Words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight.
Psalm 19:14

Blessed is the man . . . whose delight is the Word of God, who meditates on it day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season. Whose leaves shall not wither. And whatever he does shall prosper. Psalm 1:1-3

Aren't these awesome promises to those who meditate on the Word of God. Should we not learn to partake of this Discipline and key into these promises?

To Meditate is to Marinate

It is to sit quietly and let the Word become part of you, through and through.

It is to put your engine in park, still running, but not moving:

Abide in Me and Me in you. So that you can bear fruit. John 15:4

Abide means to stay in one place, stand, tarry, continue. See how this sounds like meditation?

When you meditate, you slow down and focus your mind on God and His Word. This is not ungodly meditation. In eastern religions, meditation means you empty your mind completely of all thoughts, having a mind that is open and empty. This is dangerous. An empty mind is one that is subject to spiritual attack or evil influence from demons. What is called Transcendental

Meditation for example is a technique that is derived from the Hindu religion to connect with evil spirits.

In eastern meditation the mind is disengaged. In Christian meditation, the mind remains engaged, focused on God and His Word.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about (meditate on) these things. Philippians 4:8

This week, in addition to reading your Bible, choose one verse one which to meditate. Take one line or one verse from the Word of God and memorize it, think about it, ponder it, reflect upon it. Marinate in that Word and let God speak to you and show you all kinds of wonderful things.

Some suggestions for verses to use:

Psalm 104:1-2	John 1:14
John 14:27	Revelation 19:11
John 6:35	Psalm 93:1

As you slow down and allow God to speak to you, He will show you all kinds of things that you never thought of about the Scripture. You will feel God's presence and you will become so much closer to Him. Just let life pass you by for a little while and spend some time with God. You will never regret it!

The Discipline of Solitude or Silence: Quiet Time

Meditation requires time alone with God, away from noise and distraction. Just you and God.

Jesus said, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest for a while".
Mark 6:31

And when Jesus had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Matthew 14:23

You can dialog and pray to God all day long no matter what is going on around you. But there are times you need to get away from everyone, go to your mountain and be alone with God. This is your daily quiet time with God. This is your daily time in God's Word. During this quiet time, you listen more than you talk. During this time God speaks to you in His still small voice.

God speaks not with a shout but with a still small voice. 1 Kings 19:11-13

A great example of Solitude or Quiet Time is the story of Mary and Martha:

Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42

Serving is also a Spiritual Discipline, but it cannot replace our quiet-time with God. Jesus makes it clear in this Scripture that the time at His feet are the good part, or the most important thing to do.

This week begin to put the habit of solitude in your life by getting away from the hustle and bustle of the world for 30, 45, even 60 minutes. Do this a few times this week. Turn off the TV, the ringer on your phone, and all other distractions.

Begin by thanking and praising God for a few minutes to set the spiritual atmosphere. Meditate on the goodness of God and all He has done for you. Meditate on the attributes of God and how awesome He is. Take a snippet of Scripture and meditate on it. All the while, put your focus on God. Listen. Be still. Know that He is God and He will speak to you in that still small voice, telling you many wonderful things, and drawing you closer and closer to His heart.

The Discipline of Worship

The next Spiritual Discipline we will discuss is worship. This is one my personal favorites, as I love to worship God. There is really nothing that brings me closer to God than worship. And this makes sense because Jesus told us in the Book of John:

But the hour is coming and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth. For the Father is seeking such to worship Him. John 4:23

The Greek word for Worship is *proskuneō*. It means to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand; to fawn or crouch to, that is, literally or figuratively prostrate oneself in homage, do reverence to, adore.

Do you see how wonderfully passionate and intimate worship is? Did you every own a dog and when you got home the dog was so glad to see you he was jumping and barking and trying to lick your hand and face? Then when you sat down, he just had to get in your lap or sit right next to you so that you could pet him and love on him. This is a beautiful picture of what worship should look like. Getting close to God, praising Him and thanking Him and being excited to be with Him. And then getting quiet and getting closer to God to love on Him and let Him love on you

Worship is done privately. It is part of your quiet time before God. And it is done in public – for all to see:

A woman brought an alabaster flask of oil and stood at Jesus' feet behind Him weeping. She began to wash His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. She kissed Jesus' feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Luke 7:36

We Worship God because we love Him. We worship Him because we have been forgiven much. We worship Him because we have been freed from bondage. Those who God has plucked from fire, tend to worship very radically.

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation (excess), but be filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and spiritual songs, and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our lord Jesus. Ephesians 5:18-20

This is another description of worship from the Apostle Paul. All day long you speak to people about Jesus and how awesome He is. All day long you are make melody in your heart, singing worship to Him without ceasing, thanking Him every chance that you get – all day and all night long!

Worship is not confined to Sunday morning. Worship is a lifestyle. It is adoring God all day long and even when we wake up at night. David was a worshipper, and this is one reason God call him a man after His own heart. One of my favorite Psalms of David is Psalm 63:

God, you are my God - Early will I seek you
My soul thirsts for you - My flesh longs for you
in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water.
So, I have looked for you in the sanctuary - To see your power and your glory.
Because your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise you
Thus, I will bless you while I live, and I will lift my hands in your name.
My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.
And my mouth shall praise you with joyful lips.
When I remember you on my bed, I meditate on you in the night watches.
Because you have been my help, therefore in the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.
My soul runs hard after you - Your right hand upholds me.

This is a perfect song telling of true worship of our God! This week take your worship to the next level. Really begin to be radical in your adoration and your worship. Worship in your church, when you are by yourself and worship in public. God will adore you for it and will bring you to new heights in Him.

The Disciplines of Prayer and Fasting

Prayer

In John 11:42, Jesus spoke to His Father and said, “I know you always hear Me”. So, really, prayer is simply a conversation with God. When you speak to God, He hears you, just like talking to any other person.

Luke 18:1 tells of a parable wherein Jesus emphasized that men always ought to pray and not lose heart (get weary and discouraged).

We can rephrase this to say that it is necessary for every person to pray at all times and in all places and for all things, and never get discouraged and weary. Keep praying and never stop until you have your answer from God.

There are many ways to pray, but here are just a few:

1. Conversational Prayer

This is praying while doing life. All day long – Just talk with God. Make God your best friend

2. Strategic Prayer

Strategic prayer is when God prompts you to pray about someone or something specific. God gives you His will for that person or situation and you pray it:

Now this is the confidence we have in Him: That if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we shall have the petitions that we have asked of Him. 1 John 5:14-15

3. Appointment Prayer

These are regularly scheduled times you make to pray and seek God:

The reports of Jesus went around about Him the more and great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed of their infirmities. So, Jesus often withdrew into the wilderness (quiet place) and prayed. Luke 5:15-16

If Jesus found it necessary to make times to get away to pray and seek God, how much more should we do so.

▪ During your prayer time you should also add in the other Spiritual Disciplines of Worship, Solitude and Meditation. These will make your prayer times much more meaningful and deep.

- Prayer is having a two-way conversation with God.

- Telling Him things and asking Him things
- Hearing His response

Jesus said The Father told Him what He should say and speak (talk about). And He only speaks what He is told by God. John 12:49-50

- Prayer is allowing God time to speak, and to tell you whatever He desires. He will speak to you words of encouragement or comfort, instructions, strategies and corrections, and more.

4. Praying in the Spirit

1 Thessalonians 5:17 says to pray without ceasing. The only way you can pray without ceasing is to pray in the Spirit.

I am not talking about the spiritual gift of tongues listed in 1 Corinthians 12. This is different. The gift of tongues is a message to the church or a group of people in an unknown language and needs an interpretation to be understood. Praying in the Spirit is your spirit praying to God, one on one. (See 1 Corinthians 14:2)

Praying in the spirit:

- Builds up your faith. Jude 1:20
- Sometimes you do not know what to pray, but the Holy Spirit does. Romans 8:26
- A good technique is to pray in the spirit some, then in your natural language. Go back and forth. (1 Corinthians 14:14-15). You can pray a lot longer and more effectively this manner.

The Discipline of Fasting

Jesus said in Matthew 6:16, “When you fast . . .” So, obviously, Jesus meant us to fast.

Fasting goes along with prayer. Don’t just fast and not couple it with prayer or you will miss much of the benefit of fasting.

Fasting strengthens and empowers your spirit

In Luke 4:14, Jesus was led to the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by the devil. After a 40-day fast, the Word says Jesus returned in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Fasting builds faith and eliminates doubt and unbelief

In Matthew 17:21, Jesus rebuked the disciples' unbelief and told them this kind (of demon) does not come out except by prayer and fasting. Prayer and fasting, increases faith and decreasing doubt and unbelief.

Fasting Increases Revelation

In Acts 27:21, after a long fast, Paul stood up and said, . . . take heart, for there will be no loss of life, but only the ship.

Do you see that Paul received the revelation from God of precisely what would happen to the ship and crew during his time of prayer and fasting?

Fasting brings you into the presence of God

The Pharisees asked why Jesus' disciples did not fast. Jesus told them while he was there, they did not need to fast. Only when he left, would they fast. Mark 2:19-20. In other words, the disciples were in Jesus' very presence, so fasting was not necessary. However, after Jesus was gone, fasting would again bring them into His presence.

In Acts 10:30, Cornelius explained that it was when he was fasting and praying an angel appeared to him. Here, fasting brought revelation, the presence of God and resulted in many receiving Jesus.

Some of the ways to fast:

1. Traditional Fast = Water only. No food.
2. Modified Fast = Water and other liquids such as protein drinks, juices, etc.
3. John Wesley Fast = One meal per day. John Wesley (the founder of the Methodist Church) fasted once or twice a week, every week.
4. Daniel Fast = No meats or sweets. Mainly fruits and vegetables. No rich foods.

Note: if you are pregnant, nursing, are on certain medications or have a medical condition that might preclude fasting, please be sure to consult your physician before you fast. If you work in the outdoors and/or do manual labor, you need to consider that a certain amount of water and food is necessary for your system to function properly. Consult your physician or nutritionist if you have more questions.

Please know that prayer and fasting will radically change your walk with God. No man ever undertakes a life of prayer and fasting and remains the same. Study all the great revivalists of the past and you will find they lived a life of prayer and fasting, along with the other Disciplines.

This week take a day, or more, to fast and pray. Then, begin to make this a regular habit in your life. Remember, you are still supposed to be doing the other Disciplines in addition to Prayer and Fasting. Do not do one Discipline and then stop it to start another. They are cumulative. Keep doing all of them regularly so that your maturing process keeps moving swiftly and strongly.

The Discipline of Service

In John 13:13-17 Jesus washes the feet of His disciples. This would have been unheard of in those times, for the teacher to wash the feet of his disciples. But Jesus, as He always seemed to do, turned things upside down. He told his disciples after this foot washing, “If you know these things, blessed are you if you DO THEM”

Serving is Doing: Serving God and Others in a Practical Way

In a family, every person, young and old, has job to do, such as take out garbage, do the dishes, cut the lawn, laundry, cook, etc. A church is like a family. Every member has a job that God wants him to do. Without that person doing what he is called to do, that job has to be done by someone else, or does not get done.

Have you ever heard of the 80/20 phenomenon in a church? This is when 20% of the people do 80% of the work while most of the rest do nothing. The result is usually that the 20% will burn out and the vision will not move forward.

In talking about serving, we need to look at what the Bible has to say about some of the ways in which we are to serve. Some ministry gifts are described in 1 Corinthians 12:28:

And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, **helps, administrations**, varieties of tongues.

Let's look at two of these gifts listed above:

Administrations/Government

Is the management of a ministry: organizing and facilitating the vision of the church. This gift is in the church to oversee the work to completion.

Helps

Is assisting leadership in carrying out the vision of the church in many practical ways, such as:

Hospitality, church van ministry, ushers, greeters, church caretakers, nursery, caring for shut ins and those in nursing homes, media and sound ministry, etc.

Jesus set the example for service when He said in Matthew 20:25-28:

The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve. And to give His life . . . as a ransom for many.

And then in John 15:13 when He said:

“Greater love has no one but this, than to lay down his life for his friends.”

Serving is really laying down your life for another. It is laying down your time and talents to help others, your church, a ministry, etc. Serving is not just for those who are retired or do not work full time. If you fail to serve you will fail to fly.

Phillip started in the ministry of helps and moved to evangelism. (Acts 6:1-7). He ended up one of the most powerful figures in the New Testament. Everyone starts in helps and moves from there.

Here at Isaiah 61 Ministry in Eight Mile, Pastor Shelly has the gifting of administration. If you desire to move into service in Isaiah 61 Ministry to help move the vision forward, please contact her. She will help you find your place. If you are not of Isaiah 61 Ministry, contact the appropriate person at your church and get plugged now.

The Discipline of Giving

To Give is to Gain

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

Psalms 37:4 - Delight yourself in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

John 10:18 - No man takes My life, I give it freely.

John 16:7 - When I leave I will send/give the Holy Spirit to you.

These Scriptures leave no doubt that God is by nature a giver. Thus, if you want to grow closer to God you must become a giver. If you want to become like God, you must become a giver.

When you study the Bible, you see various ways that God makes available for you to give. Each type of giving results in a certain kind of blessing.

The Tithe = 10%

Some people today say that tithing is not necessary because we do not have to follow the Law of Moses. However, tithing pre-dates Moses by at least 400 years. In fact, tithing has a continuous history from Abraham to Jesus.

After winning a major battle, Abraham paid a tithe to Malchizedek, God's priest in that day. Genesis 14:12-17

Abraham's grandson, Jacob, promised to give God a tenth of all that God gave him. Genesis 28:20-22. Jacob left his father's house with nothing but returned home a rich man. Key in this was Jacob's understanding that it was God who provided for his needs, and in return he would give back to God a tithe of all he received.

Jesus told the Pharisees that they should pay their tithes, but that they should do it with the right attitude. He also said tithing was not a substitute for mercy and justice. Matthew 23:23

Tithing allows God to open the heavens over you to pour more blessings over you:

"Bring all the tithes to the storehouse . . . and try me in this:, says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out such blessings that there will not be room enough to receive it." Malachi 3:10

Your tithe goes to your local church and it is your starting point in the Spiritual Discipline of giving. Tithing is the minimum for every believer. It is what God expects and it allows Him to open the heavens over you.

Offerings

Offerings are above and beyond the tithe. You might give offerings for missions, evangelist efforts, building projects for your church, drilling wells in Africa, etc. Whatever God lays on your heart to help finance, your giving is considered an offering. Giving offerings to God's work, gives God an avenue to provide you with even more financial blessings.

Give and it shall be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you. Luke 6:38

This Scripture is referencing judging and condemning others. But if you look closer, it also talks about giving in the passages before it. It talks about loving your enemies and doing good to them. This Scripture applies to how we treat others and it applies to how we give.

First Fruit Offerings

This is the increase you receive from your job or a new source of income. You give that increase as a first-fruit offering. This gives God an avenue to give you overflow in finances.

Honor the Lord with your increase, with the first fruits of all your crops, then your barns will be filled to overflowing and your vats with new wine. Proverbs 3:9-10

Here is an example of how it works. Let's say you get a raise from \$15/ hour to \$20/hour and you get paid for 40 hours every week. Your paycheck will go from \$600 to \$800. That means when you get the paycheck for the first week of your raise, you give a first-fruit offering \$200.

The Seed Offering

A seed is an offering sown with faith that you will receive a specific blessing and/or an exceptional harvest.

Seed sown in good ground will spring forth and multiply 30, 60, 100 or as many fold as you dare to believe for. Mark 4:8

For your seed to work, it is important to sow it into good ground, which can be a church, ministry or any group of people coming together, teaching the truth of God's word. The Holy Spirit will reveal to you where that good ground is.

You also should expect to receive a harvest in proportion to how much you sow:

He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly. He who sows bountifully (generously) will reap bountifully (generously). So, let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all this, may have an abundance for every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Alms

This is giving to the poor and needy. It can be assistance to the homeless in your city. It could be clothing drives or even helping a widow fix up her home. It could be slipping some money into the hand of someone in need as the Lord leads you. It could be helping a ministry or church that is in need.

The motivation for giving alms is compassion and love and the reward is treasures in heaven. Matthew 6:3-4

In addition to that which is laid up for us in heaven, the Lord also tells us that when we give to the poor, it is like an insurance policy:

Blessed is he who considers the poor. The Lord will deliver him in times of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive. And he will be blessed on the earth. You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him on his bed of illness. You will sustain him on his sickbed. Psalm 41:1-3

You must respond to the Gospel with faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6) This means that you must use your faith to give before you receive. This is contrary to common sense. But God's provision works by the spiritual law of faith. If you give only when you have excess to give, then faith is never needed or activated.

- The natural man says I cannot afford to give
- The spiritual man says I cannot afford not to give.

The Disciplines of Service and Giving are more practical and hands on than some of the others appear to be. To some, they do not seem spiritual at all. But they are spiritual, and it takes discipline to live a life of service and giving. Again, as with all the other Disciplines, it is easier not to do them than to do them. That is why it takes discipline. That is why it takes the Holy Spirit to help us and keep us moving, even in the areas of service and giving.

This week make a firm decision to Tithe and then actually start Tithing. This is your starting point in a life of giving. When you have made this a regular habit, increase your giving, with offerings, first-fruits, etc. And expect God to respond to your obedience with many abundant blessings.

Conclusion

There are other Spiritual Disciplines that are taught by some, but we think if you put the Disciplines we have set forth here into practice, you will make steady progress towards spiritual maturity. You will climb higher and higher with God and be able to reach your destiny. As with anything in life, what you put in tends to determine what you get out. If you fail to apply yourself to grow in the Lord, you will simply not grow in the Lord. However, if you do – they sky is the limit!

We love you and hope to see you soon.

Isaiah 61 Ministry
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