

Sunday, February 5, 2023

Title: Spiritual Disciplines and Gethsemane

Lauren Caldwell, Garden Gathering, 2/5/23

I would like to invite you to a deeper understanding of spiritual disciplines. I talked about this some weeks ago in a K3 class, so you are going to get *the information* in a much shorter amount of time. But, I encourage you to *listen and dig into this*. I am sure we will put the notes on the web. I feel like the Lord is really wanting us to get this, because He loves us. He desires more intimacy with you. That is what this is about. We can get a little bit “important,” and “have to work for God.” But, then we can also overcorrect and be completely passive in our walk *and* our relationship with the Lord. So, I do not want you to go to either extreme. I want you to walk right down the middle by His Spirit. Another good way to know that you are not going too far this way or that way, is to be around other believers.

We have cell groups. That is a spiritual discipline in that you meet together with one another. I may have said this repeatedly, but it is on my heart, and I believe it is from the Lord. Here in the West, we have a very individualistic idea of what it is to be a son or daughter of our living God, *which is saying*, “Jesus Christ is my personal Lord and Savior.” Yes, He is. But, He said that He loves the world. It is not just about you. If your faith is private, and you do not talk about it or you do not share it with anybody else, that is not biblical. When God proposed the covenant to His Bride on Mount Sinai, He had instructions for all of Israel. He did not just say to Bildad or Jehu, “I want you to do this.” He said, “Tell the children of Israel, tell the sons, tell the daughters, consecrate yourselves, set yourselves apart, for tomorrow or the next day, for I am going to do this.”

What I am going to talk about is actually going to be more in keeping with your personal relationship with Jesus Christ, but it has to be part of a whole. You have to be somewhere for accountability. You have to be somewhere to give. As you may have heard me say before, “You cannot be big eared and big reared.” That is funny, but you cannot just come here and sit and listen.

You have something to give. If you are born again by the living God, you have something to give, and you have somewhere to serve. Now, there is a maturity level to where you serve and what you do. Absolutely, but that is my exhortation and borderline rebuke. If you are not meeting together with your brothers and sisters, you are treacherously close to being deceived. As the days go on, when truth is harder and harder to find, you do not want to be out there by yourself.

Some of you may remember watching on Sunday afternoons, the Mutual of Omaha with Marlin Perkins television series about safari animals. They would show a wildebeest limping along all alone, and you would know the show *was going to be* about the lion who went after it and killed it. This is doctrine. Do not be out there on your own or you will be eaten. Get together with some people with authority. If you do not, it is on you. All right?

Did I say authority? Did I say that other people could be in your business, and say how are you doing? How are you doing with the Lord? Yes, absolutely. Paul did, and you can see from his letters. He says, “the more I write to you, the less you love me.” That is a peril of bringing correction and authority. You say, “Well, do not judge.” The Bible says that we are to judge. We have righteous judgment in the body of Christ. If you see your brother or your sister in sin, say something. Do not just say, “Well, that is not my *concern*.” If you have that sin in your life, kill it.

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Then say something. Check yourself first. It does not say get the “log out of your eye,” and just sit there and pray for them from afar, or maybe pray together with somebody about it. It says, “you go,” and that is what we are lacking. That is a part of why we are being picked off, left and right. We must take this seriously.

I am telling you I am weak. The Lord had to put me in the middle of nowhere, living all by myself, because I think I would just be distracted or I would compare and be too much in the rat race. He says, “Oh, honey, you are just out there. I cannot even have you in town. You have to be in the country.” I am weak, but He is strong, and He knows I am weak. He knows my frame. He knows I am made of dirt. But, I do not take that as an excuse to not do everything I can to honor Him. That is where this scripture comes in.

II Peter 1:5-8

But to obtain these gifts, you need more than faith. You must also work hard to be good, and even that is not enough. For then, you must learn to know God better and discover what He wants you to do. Next, learn to put aside your own desires, so that you will become patient and godly, gladly letting God have His way with you. This will make possible the next step which is for you to enjoy other people and to like them. Finally, you will grow to love them deeply. The more you go on in this way, the more you will grow strong spiritually and become faithful and useful to our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have to work at it. Now, we are not going to the extreme. You are not born again by your works. Paul even rebukes those in Galatia. “Have you been bewitched? What happened to you, having been born by the Spirit are you now being perfected by the flesh?” He is saying, “How did you get born again to begin with? It was God.” So, you are not going to get all that better, just working hard. At the same time, you have got to submit to God and do what He tells you to do. Then you will grow and it is spiritual.

We have overcorrected sometimes where we do not want to be legalistic. That is true. I remember someone would not put their Bible anywhere but on a table. Well, that is a little legalistic. But, maybe I lacked reverence. Now, I am not saying you should not put your Bible other places, but maybe it was convicting me that I should revere the Word of God a little more. Does that make sense? It is not about where you set your Bible. It is about honoring God. It is about the fear of the Lord. We are sorely lacking in the fear of the Lord. We in the House of God, are the ones that are lacking in the fear of the Lord. I want us to get that by submitting ourselves to Him. He wants you to have that reverence for Him. He is prepared to bring it. When it happens, mostly you see how good He is. It just blows your mind, and it draws you in. I want you to be fascinated with Him.

So, when I say a spiritual discipline, here is something that is going to take the pressure off. It is probably something you already do. I was reading in a book I just found out about, “Nine Ways of Connecting with God.” The *author* brings out a point regarding Jesus in Gethsemane. Some of you may not know that Gethsemane is a garden with an olive grove where Jesus would often go and pray and be in communion with the Father. Can anyone tell me what Gethsemane means? It means, “the crushing,” as in where they crushed the olives. The garden of Gethsemane is where Jesus prayed that night before the crucifixion. That is where He dropped blood. But, also it was His place to meet with God. That was His place of intimacy. He went there often. He did not just pick that place after meeting with all of His followers, to go and pray that one time before crucifixion, because it was convenient. This is where He often went.

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Luke 21:37

It says, *"In the day time He was teaching in the temple, but at night, He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet."* That is the, the Mount of Olives, and in the gardens. He was used to going there. He went there a lot.

Luke 22:39

"Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives as He was accustomed, and His disciples followed Him."

So this was a place where Jesus really connected with the Father. This was His go to. This was His "jam." It was it was where He chose to have the face off with the soldier. He picked His place of intimacy with God, for Judas to come and find Him there. So, that is what a spiritual discipline can be in your life. It is where you connect with God. Even if you do not know you have one yet, and I am going to name some off. But, it is where you are strong. You have been there before. You know what it is like to be in this place and you have a history. You know that worn out place, maybe where your knees have been. You can choose your Gethsemane. Yes, you may face the hardest trial of your life in that place. But, it is a place where you have been built up, and there is an intimacy there.

I am going to read off some of the places, that I know in our House that are peoples' places of Gethsemane. In some of these, it may be also be an exhortation to get after it again. If you haven't in a while. Julie's is when she is at the keyboard or piano writing songs. She is connecting with God there when things get hard for her. Elisa goes on walk. Hannah plays the guitar in worship as a way to fill up *on His presence*. Debra gets all her concordances and Bibles out and studies. Cliff goes to Alpine. All these are not studious things are they? Sometimes we think that being a follower of Jesus means you have to get out and do Bible study all the time.

Danetta goes to her basement with her coffee to be with God there and get strengthened when she knows she is going to be in a spiritual battle. That is where she is going to say to the enemy, "Come and pick a fight with me in this place. Because, I have a history here. I know what I am doing." Sophia likes to journal. She likes those that have prompts that help her think and write out what comes to her heart. Anna creates and pours out in communing with the Lord. Daniel prays and worships. Karen delves into learning a new musical skill that she has never done before. When she started playing the electric guitar, that might have been just a gift to me from the Lord. Suzanne, I feel you like to write people notes or email words of exhortation.

See, it does not always have to be studies. If you say, "I do not have one yet." You can borrow one of theirs. Do what they do. You do not have to do the same thing all the time. I myself cross train. I am consistent in doing something to better myself in the Lord on purpose. My flesh does not like it. There are some things my flesh likes. But, others I have to press through to do them, because the devil hates it. If you think there is not demonic opposition, then you are wrong. You are you are foolish. You are only living *by* what you can see. They are saying, "Whatever you do, do not let her go for a walk in the pasture. Do not let her get out there." I think someday that I am going to go out in our pasture, and see in the spirit, where I have left things and where I have forgiven people. Like banners hanging on trees is just how I see it. Where God has answered a prayer, where there was a revelation, and I remember understanding this when I stood right here.

I have a special one I am reminded of in the song we sang in worship, "You Came." Years ago, I was devastated. I was dead. I was in the grave. Mancy held me when I would boohoo my

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head off. So what did I do, I went away with the Lord. We cannot always do it, but try to get away somewhere to get stuff worked out with God in your heart. I went in faith, in the middle of nowhere, in an RV. I took a book to read that was by someone else. When I read it, God ministered to my heart. That song had just come out during that time. The words, "I was dead. I knew that you would come," ministered to me in that, I felt dead and went out because, I knew when I went out there, He was calling me and that He would come. I knew He would come and He did. So, I have got that with Him. That was a Gethsemane for me. Reading a book, or reading His word, and just being out kind of on my own. Now, mamas of young ones, your Gethsemane may be rocking babies while they sleep. That is okay. You go with what the Lord is calling you to do.

If you still do not have a clue, like I said, just pick something and try it. This is a discipline, and like any discipline, you do not have to jump in over your head completely the first time you do it. Do it with the intention of doing what little you can do, well. But, if you have never fasted before, then a 40 day water fast is probably not for you. Okay, try a lunch, then try a day. I am just sharing a lot out of my testimony, because I can credit fasting as a discipline which accelerated growth for myself early on. There were some things I did, that just put me in another gear higher and that is one of them.

When I was meeting with Brandy one on one. I was fasting, and I was also sitting with her as she ministered to other people. That is a good combination. It is available to every one of you. Walk with someone closely, and fast in whatever way the Lord tells you. Sit along side someone and start ministering, helping, serving and giving to people. That is for all of us, and it is not unique to me.

Those are disciplines. It is the things you do on purpose. This is a guide. Where we used to work out they would say, "1% better every day. Every time you do it just 1% better every day." It is not doing it 1000% every time you do it. Showing up is half of the battle or more. Getting in that place, and going to Gethsemane. Jesus might have liked to have gone and had pita bread somewhere and had someone waving palm leaves over Him as He rested. He might have gone to His flesh for comfort. But, no, He went to a place where He could meet with the Father. He set the stage for when those challenges came, that He was able to name the time. Any challenge you are going through, does not have control over you. It does not. You can meet the Lord, and *He* will meet you there. You have control and authority over where you have these testings and these trials. Now, you may not have expected it, but you can be seated with the Father in heavenly places no matter where you are. It does not have to be out in the boonies in an RV. It can be in your car. I am in the car a lot, but that is not going to be your deepest place. It is a good place, but do not let that be your deepest place.

All of these should be something we are doing already. I do not want to make you feel guilty. I am inviting you to start spiritual disciplines. We are all at very different places in this room. If you crash and burn your first attempt, good for you, you tried! You will do better. You will do that 1% better the next time. There will be grace on it. That is another *benefit* of belonging with other people. You can share with somebody that you trust who is an authority in your life. "Hey, I am going to try to fast." It makes you accountable. You are not bragging about it. You are just saying, "Hey, could you pray for me as I start this? It is the first time I have ever done it." Or, "I am not going to buy new clothes for a year," or whatever it is. Holy Spirit will speak to you in what He knows you need.

Abstinence is a discipline of giving up something or staying away from something that usually gives you pleasure.

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Solitude, or getting alone. Jesus often got alone to fill up with the Father. If you do not like to be alone, maybe solitude will silence all the talking *so you can hear the Lord and kill that stuff* with Jesus. It is amazing what just being quiet will do for you. Sometimes it is kind of hard to come out of *solitude*. I am generally pretty friendly, but after I have been quiet for a long time, it is a little bit awkward to speak again. I have gained so much just being quiet.

Fasting, there is such power in it. If you want to know how much flesh you have, get “hangry” on purpose. You will not have to wonder if you need Jesus. It just messes everything up. It is usually not eating food. There are also fasts of social media which I highly recommend. Most of the time a fast has to do with getting control of your physical body through food. I prefer to just not eat, but there are other fasts like a “Daniel” fast of no meats or sweets for awhile. You have to actually think about what not to eat instead of just hunkering down and not eating. If you do not understand fasting, get in touch with me, or any of the leaders here or in your cells. Cell leaders, if you have not fasted, start today so when they talk to you, you will have had the experience. Jesus fasted a lot. We deny ourselves by the absence of comfort. It is not a weight loss program. It is not a hunger strike against God, until He does what you want. Fasting is that I am voluntarily making myself weak and showing how fleshy I can be, so that I can put it to death. You are hungrier for the Lord, than whatever you have given up. There are costs to fasting. If you do it in a sustained way regularly, which is an option, it can mess up your metabolism. It is hard. I am giving testimony here. I cannot work out if I am not eating. So, I lose the gains in fitness. When the Lord calls me to fast, I have to count the cost. I really like this, and you are telling me to put that aside. Hunger is one of the issues, but as you continue you have to be aware of your schedule, family, and commitments. Fasting works things into your heart. For me, it breaks me out of my routine. I do not know what to eat, and I am crabby about it, but I am getting settled.

Frugality is another spiritual discipline. No retail therapy when you are uncomfortable. Do you know what I mean by retail therapy. Do not go shopping to get that high endorphin comfort. Even if you are cranky, and you want to comfort yourself with watching media or going to get a latte or hot tea. Choose to forego that every once in a while.

Chastity, is being sexually pure.

Secrecy, is a discipline when you do something good, and do not post it or talk about it. Even if people are in front of you saying, “Did you know that someone did this good thing ...?” and you are the one that did it. You will want to say, “I had something to do with that.” But, no, you are quiet. Honor God in the secrecy. I promise, it will kill something in you.

Sacrifice, or give sacrificially. Grant has talked to us before. Do not just give someone a coat. Give them your favorite coat. Do not just give them a pen. Give them your favorite pen. Start small or start big. If you say the Lord is telling you to sell everything and move to somewhere. Okay, go for it. That is that is an option also. We want to say, “Yes, Lord, I am sacrificing to be closer to you, because I love you.” There is really nothing we have to give, but our love and obedience, right? That is all you have to give. He sets us up and gives us the grace to do it.

Engagement is a discipline you do like Bible study. Get in the Bible and read it. It does not mean you have to read the Greek, the Hebrew, the Aramaic, and everything else. If it means getting a workbook and going through the Bible study, do it. If it means sitting there with a YouTube teaching, or our school of ministry classes, or messages on Sunday mornings, do that. Sit down and study through it. Stop, chew, and dig into it and read the scriptures. That is excellent. But, I do not want you to think that is the only thing. I never knock that, because I especially like it. That is a Gethsemane for me. But, I think we have alienated some people in Jesus’s family by saying you have to study a lot. You do not. You do need to honor God’s word

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and meditate on it and do it. But, if it is not your thing to be locked in a room with books, books, and books, that is fine.

Worship is a discipline. Worship, worship, worship, that is powerful. It is not a passive thing. I did not say listen to worship music. That is a good thing. But, I mean worship Him like we did today. Get active in it. God, I thank you for this. Posture yourself physically by jumping, getting on your face, getting on your knees, lifting your hands, dance or whatever God is pulling you to do. Worship Him with your words. Do you know that journaling and painting can be worship? God you are amazing. All of these things can be worship.

Celebration is another spiritual discipline. Do you know that God loves to party? He does. He has got a big wedding planned for us. We are the guests of honor. It is about the feasts of the Lord. He set them up for times to say, I definitely want you. I want you to eat this and this. It is good. We want to come together and celebrate. We have a new grand baby. When I walked into our meeting, everybody said, "Yay, how is Georgia?" We celebrated together. I long for routine. When people want to have a holiday, it just messes up one more chance of my having a routine, because I have so little routine. Does anybody out here *relate*? Maybe the people who travel a lot? I love Mondays because it is one more chance to do the stuff in a row, that I did not get to do in a row last week. If somebody wants to throw a holiday in there and stop and celebrate something.... I am just confessing, and I am growing in this. I have a lot of people in my family which means a lot of birthdays. I really want to celebrate them, because I love to be celebrated. So, we can grow in that with one another, celebrate each other, and come together. Make a big deal about stuff.

Service as a discipline. We have a million opportunities to serve. You know that serving is not just handing stuff to homeless people? Everybody's looking at the floor now, because I am calling out names. But, Estella is especially gifted at helps. Her Gethsemane could just be mopping the floor. She loves to clean and cook. She is serving well when she does that. Whoever moved this pulpit stand over is serving. It is not just in this House, you can be a servant wherever you are. If you see that the copier needs paper, put the paper in. Pick somebody and choose to serve them. That is what Jesus did. Can you believe that our God serves us. He chooses to. He is still ministering to us.

Prayer is a spiritual discipline. Come on, could the guilt please go away? None of us are as good at praying as we think we should be. We are right. But, "1% better every day." Lord, "what if I listened to prayer? What if I am around prayer?" That is a good start. It really is. Pray, open your mouth, and say it out loud! The more you do it, the better you get at it. But, if you feel like you are bad at praying, then you probably won't. One time I nailed it in praying. I fasted when I prayed. I mean I was on it, but nothing happened that I saw anyway. Then there have been other times I say, "Jesus, would you open that situation for them?" Then bam, there it is! So, if you just pray all the time, in every manner, you are going to do something, and you are going to get better in every way. If you do not know what to pray, start reading the Psalms and praying them out loud plugging in your name in or someone's name and heart. But, we have to be people of prayer. You are not just in intercession. But, talking with God all the time. We have got to grow here. But, if we feel like we are doing a bad job, no one is going to try it. Just try. Just start and continue. Keep doing what you are doing.

Fellowship is another discipline. I have already hit that a lot. Get together with other believers. Can I say something? Your best friend is not supposed to be an unbeliever? "Bad company corrupts good character," that is in the word. Get out there. Get amongst all the people as Jesus did. That is what we are supposed to do. But, be around other people that pull you up and provoke you to make you better.

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Confession is a discipline. Well, I exemplified that about me and holidays, right? Confessing one to another. That is about as much fun as fasting. I have got this, Lord. No, the Bible says, "Confess your sins one to another, and you will be healed." So, if there is somewhere that you are not getting breakthrough, may I suggest to you "confess your sins one to another." Now, do not just talk about it. We have to kill it. "I hate to say this, but 'I have got to get some help here. I am really having trouble killing this."

Now, I want to tell you a pet peeve of mine personally. This is Lauren, and not on behalf of the Garden Gathering Church, or board. When people say, "Well, I am just struggling with this." Quit struggling and kill it! "I am just wrestling with it." Shoot it. Do not wrestle. I understand a battle. I can be in a mood. But, quit playing around. If it is a sin, the Bible says, "If it causes you to sin, cut your hand off or put your eye out."

Number one, you are already more mature than you think you are. You already have these disciplines in your life. Maybe you are just now recognizing them, or I have given you an idea of what to do or start doing. If it is a Bible reading plan on an app, start there. If it is a devotional every day, do it. Amazing! If you miss a day, do not quit. Just catch up. I am currently on year four of my Bible in a year reading plan. Okay, just keep on going. Keep on going with what the Lord is showing you on purpose, because you want to be mature. You cannot say, "Adulting is hard and all that stuff." It is kind of funny, but stop it! Quit whining.

We are supposed to be adults. We are supposed to be doing the hard stuff. It is a joy. Because then you get to tear stuff down, and you get to make real change, because you have that authority. Adulting is the goal. So, let's grab hold of it. I do not care how old you are. Grab hold of, "I am supposed to be mature. I am supposed to do things, that make me better. I am supposed to honor God with my life, because all I have to give Him is love and obedience. So, let me do it. Guess what? It is fun. It is rewarding. It is refreshing. It is so wonderful to break through something and not have it on your back anymore. Hallelujah! Jesus came so that you could live freely and in a mature way. That is what I have for us this morning. Thank you so much for your attention. I pray God moves in your life and you do something today. Everybody's skipping lunch today, right? Just kidding. But, if He is calling you to, do it!

Father God, I thank you so much for this opportunity to speak on your behalf. I ask that as this House and those online hear, that we will grab hold of what you are calling us to. That we will be mature, that we will be about our Father's business, and that we will have such joy in our fellowship with you. God, I ask you to make it very clear where our Gethsemane is. Give us that authority in the place of intimacy to overcome everything, as your Son did. It is in Jesus's name I pray. Amen.