

## **The Sermon - In 10 Sentences Or Less**

### Your Home Spiritual Workout 1 - Train, Don't Just Try:



1. For Lent 2021, we're going to focus on personal spiritual habits or practices that you'll get to try out at home, but first we need to lay some groundwork, specifically we want to look at two foundational biblical principles about our spiritual lives.

2. Principle #1 = Don't just try hard at your relationship with God, be trained instead.

3. This dovetails with the gospels' chief word for believers, "disciples," which simply means to become Jesus' student or apprentice, learning life from Him as you spend time with Him.

4. On several occasions, St. Paul likens our spiritual lives to athletic competition and training (see 1st Cor. 9.24-27): we need to run to win, not merely participate, we need to have a plan, and not just run aimlessly, etc.

5. Principle #2 = Do your part, and let God do His (and don't confuse who does what): we plant spiritually, God's Spirit brings a harvest of divine life (Gal. 6.8), or we work hard at our salvation because we know that God is beneath it all working on us too (Phil. 2.12-13).

6. Richard Foster says that we are like farmers in our spiritual lives: we do our spade work, we set the conditions, and then we let God bring the growth that only He can.

7. Because they are a chief window through which God acts in and shapes us, "spiritual disciplines" aren't harsh or burdensome; they are instead, as the late Eugene Peterson put it, "instruments of joy."

8. Richard Rohr writes that our spiritual habits and routines are what keep us awake and attentive in life, ready to encounter God at any moment or hear what He wants to say.

9. Even in the face of tremendous personal hardship, we just need to keep "digging the well deeper," that is, grow more committed to and creative in our spiritual disciplines because they are how we stay connected to our Life source (see Jeremiah 2.13).

10. In the end, what every other person experiences about us is the result of our own personal spiritual habits and rhythms.

## **Quote to Consider**

John Ortberg, in "The Life You've Always Wanted," on trying vs. training:

*"Here's the spiritual principle to remember: there's an immense difference between training to do something and trying to do something...For most of my life, when I heard messages about following Jesus, I thought in terms of trying hard to be like Him. So after hearing – or, in my case, preaching – a great sermon on discipleship on Sunday, I'd wake up Monday determined to do better. And I'd end up exhausted and defeated.*

*"Spiritual transformation is not a matter of trying harder, but of training wisely. The need for preparation, or training, includes very Christian sentiments like forgiving others, be joyful, or being courageous. These are learned behaviors, they don't come naturally to you, nor will you achieve them through mere effort.*

*"For me, this truth brought light to my ignorance. For the first time as an adult, I found the notion of following Jesus concrete, real, and tangible. William Pausell writes, "It is unlikely that we will deepen our relationship with God in a casual or haphazard manner. There will be a need for some intentional commitment and some reorganization in our own lives..."*

## **A Prayer for the Week**

Adapted from Holy Disciples Parish Church (Puyallup WA):

"Good and gracious God, Your Son, Jesus Christ, invites all people to follow him and become his disciples. Touch our hearts, enlighten our minds, and stir our spirit so that we become His motivated students. Help us daily to take steps to lose the life we have in order to gain the life He wants to give us. Father, may our faith in Your Son increase, so that we trust Him more and more to reshape us from the inside out. May we slow down long enough to be filled with Your love. And may our hunger for Your good news intensify, this we pray, amen."