“Like a city that is broken into and without walls
Is a man who has no control over his spirit.”
Proverbs 25:28
A Disciplined Life
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True Righteousness
“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Matthew 5:20)

1. Jesus made a bold statement in the Sermon on the Mount when He said, “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. 5:20). How did the Jewish public view the Scribes and Pharisees? How did the Scribes and Pharisees view themselves?

2. Would you describe their lives as “disciplined?” Support your answer. Using the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) determine what was the problem with the righteousness of the Pharisees.

3. How does Jesus describe the citizens of His Kingdom? (Matt. 5:3-19). Is this how you view those that are righteous today? What is challenging for you as you try to match this picture of righteousness?

4. Where does sin come from? (Matt. 15:1-20). Explain why outward disciplines alone will never be enough to solve the problem of sin.

5. What were Jesus’ instructions the teachings of the Pharisees? (Matt. 23:1-3). What can we learn from this about how we should listen to religious teachers?
6. What were the seven woes (or eight depending on your translation) that Jesus had against the Pharisees in Matthew 23? How can we be guilty of each of these same woes today? What was the punishment for these sins?

a. 

b. 

c. 

d. 

e. 

f. 

g.
A Disciplined Life
_A Soldier, an Athlete, A Farmer, and a Prisoner_
_(2 Timothy 2)_

1. Describe Paul’s relationship to Timothy (cp. 2 Tim. 1:2; Acts 16:1-5). What does it take for a relationship like this to develop? Explain how Paul’s relationship to Timothy helped the process of passing on teaching and instruction.

2. Describe God’s plan for passing on instruction and making more teachers (2 Tim. 2:2). What makes somebody a “faithful” individual? (Use this book to define faithful)

3. How is a Christian like a soldier? What can we learn from a soldier’s discipline to help us lead disciplined Christian lives? (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

4. How is a Christian like an athlete? What can we learn from an athlete’s discipline to help us lead disciplined Christian lives? (2 Tim. 2:5).

5. How is a Christian like a farmer? What can we learn from a farmer’s discipline to help us lead disciplined Christian lives? (2 Tim. 2:6).

6. What gave Paul the discipline to endure hardship as a prisoner? (2 Tim. 2:8-13).
7. From **verses 14-26** describe things that Christians must avoid or put away.

8. From **verses 14-26** describe things that Christians must pursue or put on.

9. What does this chapter teach us about discipline? Practically, what does it take to become a more disciplined Christian?
Meditation
“...Think on these things.”
(Philippians 4:8)

1. What are some things that influence how we think, and what we think about?

2. When you hear the word “meditation” what do you think about? How does popular culture view meditation? Read Psalm 1:2, Psalm 19:7-14, and Psalm 119:9-16. Is the meditation described in these Bible passages the same as the world views it?

3. How does Paul describe spiritual warfare in 2 Corinthians 10:1-6? What does it mean to “take every thought captive?” Why is this process often difficult?

4. How does Paul describe the change in the way a Christian thinks? (Rom. 12:1-2). In these verses, what is the purpose for our change in thinking?

5. In Philippians 2:2 (as well as much of the book) Paul instructs the brethren to be of the same mind. What does it mean to be of the same mind? How do we accomplish this? (Phil. 2:3-5).

6. What types of things are Christians commanded to think about? (Phil. 4:8-9). What do you think would change in your life if you only thought these things?
7. What kind of practical steps might a Christian take to prepare for meditation? What might this look like? What is the purpose of meditation?

8. This week skim through the book of Psalms and write down a list of positive things that the Psalmists dwell on. Bring the list and the verses where these things are found to class and be prepared to share.
Contentment
“...But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.”
(2 Timothy 6:6)

1. Make a list of wealthy righteous characters in the Bible. Make a list of poor righteous characters in the Bible. What similarities are there between the two groups?

2. What did Jesus say about giving? (Acts 20:35). What is the purpose of our work? (Eph. 4:28). Describe how giving ensures equality among the people of God. (2 Cor. 8:13-15)

3. It is clearly not a sin to be wealthy. List the specific instructions Timothy is to give to wealthy Christians (1 Tim. 6:5-10, 17-19). Do you consider yourself wealthy? What things does Paul say we are to be content with? (1 Tim. 6:8).

4. Our society is obsessed with all things new, modern, valuable, innovative, etc. How can a focus on these things hurt our spirituality?

5. What are some practical ways we can reduce our dependence on “stuff” and “things?”
6. What are some practical ways to help children become good at recognizing the difference between needs and wants?

7. What does it mean to pray for our “daily bread?” (Matt. 6:11). What did Agur ask of God in Proverbs 30:7-9? How can praying like him change our attitude?

8. What was the “secret” Paul learned that allowed him to be content in all circumstances? (Phil. 4:10-13). How can we practically learn this same secret?
Fasting

“But the days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, in those days they will fast” (Luke 5:35).

1. Do some research and find out what type(s) of fasting were practiced in Bible days. Is this the different or the same type of fasting as that practiced today?

2. What was the only commanded fast in the Law of Moses? (Lev. 16:29ff, 23:27) What purpose was given for these fasts? How often were some Jews fasting by the time of Jesus? (Luke 18:12).

3. What are some of the reasons Bible characters fasted?
   a. Ezra (Ezra 8:21)-
   b. City of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5)-
   c. David (2 Samuel 1:12)-
   d. Anna (Luke 2:37)-
   e. Jesus (Matthew 4)-

4. What did Jesus confirm through fasting? (Matt. 4:4; see also John 4:32-34). Why is this lesson so important, especially for a wealthy nation like ours?

5. What did David learn from fasting? (Psalm 69:10)
6. Look at the following passages describing fasting in the early church. What can we learn from these about the people involved, the occasion for, and the methods involved in these fasts? *(Acts 9:9, 10:30, 13:2-3, 14:23, 1 Cor. 7:5)*

7. Did Jesus’ disciples fast when He was on the earth? When did he say they would fast? *(Matt. 9:15, Luke 5:35)*. When did this take place?

8. What regulations did Jesus put on fasting? *(Matt. 6:16-18)*. Why is it so easy to abuse the spiritual discipline of fasting?

9. What do you think are some reasons why fasting is not practiced or discussed in modern times as much as it was during Bible times? Do you find anything difficult about the concept of fasting? If so, what?

10. Does fasting have a useful purpose in the church today? If so, what would Christians be hoping to accomplish by a fast?
Personal Bible Study

“For he had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.” (Ezra 7:10)

1. Who was Ezra? What was his role in the Jewish nation? How does the Bible describe him? (Ezra 7:1-10)

2. What can we learn from Ezra’s approach to Bible learning? (Ezra 7:10) Explain what three things he had set his heart to do, and why all three are essential for believers.

3. What mission did King Artaxerxes give Ezra? Why? What was his reaction? (Ezra 7:11-28). Do some research and find out what the legacy of Ezra’s work was.

4. What was Paul’s system for teaching future generations? (2 Tim. 2:2). Why is this essential? What is eventually expected out of mature Christians? (Heb. 5:11-14).

5. What do the following verses teach about Scripture? (Rom. 15:4, 2 Tim. 3:14-17, 1 Pet. 3:15, 2 Pet. 1:2-3, Jude 3).

6. Skim over Psalm 119. What is this entire Psalm about? What can we learn from the Psalmists attitude about Scripture?

7. What are some practical ways we can work on increasing our Bible knowledge? How can we turn study into a Spiritual discipline rather than an occasional hobby?
Personal Prayer

“The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”
(James 5:16)

1. What is prayer? Find Bible passages that describe what happens during prayer.

2. Why is it sometimes difficult to have a regular prayer life? What do you find difficult about prayer?

3. What are some things that can interfere with our prayer and worship life? The following passages should help. Isa. 29:13; Matt. 5:23-24, 6:5-8; James 1:5-8, 4:1-3; 1 Pet. 3:7; 1 John 3:21-22.

4. Bible characters pray in many different “positions.” Examples include standing (Gen. 24:12-14), lifting the hands (1 Tim. 2:8), sitting (Jud. 20:26), kneeling (Mark 1:40), looking upward (John 17:1), bowing down (Ex. 34:8), placing the head between the knees (1 Kgs. 18:42), pounding on the chest (Luke 18:13), and facing the temple (Dan. 6:10). Is there a “right way” to pray? What is the purpose of these positions? How do they affect the mindset of the one praying?

5. What is the reason for prayers being offered in James 5:16-20? Why is it good for us to pray these same types of prayers? What makes Elijah such a good example for our prayer life?
6. What do we learn about God from His interaction with Moses in **Exodus 32:11-14**? Why is this concept exciting for praying believers? Can you find other Biblical examples of God doing this same thing?

7. What did Paul mean when he instructed the Thessalonians to “pray without ceasing”? *(1 Thess 5:17)*. What does this mean to you? Is this practical?

8. How do we learn to become better at prayer? *(Luke 11:1)*

9. Practically, how can we as a congregation help each other to become better at regular personal prayer?
Submission
Citizen, Slave, Spouse, and Savior
(1 Peter 2-3)

1. Define submission. Why is this a difficult attitude for some people to have? Who in the church is commanded to practice submission? *(Eph. 5:21)*

2. What were the circumstances of the audience in 1 Peter? *(1 Peter 1:1-9)*

3. What would a citizen under the Roman government *(1 Pet. 2:13-17)*, a slave under an unreasonable master *(2:18-20)*, and a believing woman married to an unbelieving husband *(3:1-6)* have in common in regards to their submission and subjection? What might be some of the reasons Peter singles these 3 groups out?

4. When is submission or subjection easy? When is it difficult?

5. Who is given as the ultimate example of submission? *(1 Pet. 2:21-25)* What made His submission so amazing? What attitudes and character traits must we develop to be able to submit in this way?

7. How can we practice submission to government?

8. How can we practice submission to our employers?

9. How can we practice submission to the appropriate family members?

10. What is the end result of learning to submit?
Keeping Your Word
“Let your yes be yes and your no be no.”
(Matthew 5:37)

1. Describe the character and actions of a dependable person. What makes a person trustworthy?

2. What was the Old Testament teaching on making vows and promises? (Num. 30:1-2; Deut. 23:23; Lev. 5:4-5).

3. What does the writer of Ecclesiastes teach about keeping vows and promises? (Eccl. 5:4-7). Why is it so serious to keep one’s word?


5. Explain Jesus’ teachings about making vows and promises (Matt. 5:33-37). Was this different than Old Testament regulations? If so, how and why?

6. Why is it important to have dependable and trustworthy members in our churches? In our families? In our workplaces? What can our dependability teach others about the God that we serve?
7. Why is it often difficult to keep our word? What are obstacles that make it difficult to be dependable?

8. Are there any vows that Christians make today? If so, what are they? What would keeping or breaking these show about our character?

9. What character trait(s) of God should inspire us to do better with keeping promises? \textit{(Heb. 6:12-20, 13:8)}. How will a church be affected as its members become more dependable?
Listening

“He who has an ear to hear, let him hear…”
(Revelation 2:7)

1. Would you consider listening skills a discipline? Why or why not?

2. What are some reasons why people are often poor listeners? Where and when do we learn listening skills? Is there room to improve these?


4. What does the phrase, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Mean? (Rev. 2:7). What does the phrase “Having ears, do you not hear.” mean? (Mark 8:18).

5. What things (there are many correct answers) can get in the way of listening? (John 8:47). List as many as you can think of.

6. The Thessalonians are praised by Paul for the way they listened (1 Thess. 2:13). Why? What makes a good listener? Why is it important to work on these skills? What will a church full of good listeners look like?
7. List as many good listeners from the Bible as you can think of. What did they have in common?

8. List as many bad listeners from the Bible that you can think of. What did they have in common?

9. What are some practical techniques we can use to get better at listening?
Solitude
“He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray.”
(Matthew 14:23)

1. Explain the difference between taking time for solitude and anti-social behavior?

2. How did Jesus start His ministry? *(Matt. 4:1-11).* What did He learn from this? How did Paul start his ministry? *(Gal. 1:11-18).* What did he learn from this?

3. Besides Jesus and Paul, list other Bible characters who made time for solitude.

4. What did Jesus do before picking the 12 Apostles? *(Luke 6:12).* What might we learn from this for our lives?

5. What did Jesus do immediately after gaining fame from healing a leper? *(Luke 5:16).* What might we learn from this in our lives?

6. Jesus repeatedly withdrew from the public eye, including the transfiguration *(Matt. 17:1-9)*, and in the garden before His arrest and crucifixion *(Matt. 26:36-46).* What made solitude such a priority for Jesus?
7. Would you consider solitude a discipline? Do you ever take any time (anywhere from 5 minutes to 5 days or more) to be alone with God? Why is it often difficult to do so? What is the value of solitude?

8. Jesus made sure to have alone time with His Apostles? In Mark 6:31-34 what was it that took priority over solitude? What does this teach us about how we should approach the discipline of solitude?

9. What are some practical ways we can make sure we have special time set aside for only us and God? How can we help new Christians, busy Christians, and lonely Christians to see the importance of this?
Group Worship

“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.”

(John 4:24)

1. What does our English word “worship” mean? What is it’s origin?

2. There are 7 Hebrew words (Barak, Hallal, Shachah, Tehillah, Todah, Yadah, and Zamar) and 3 Greek words (Proskuneo, Latreuo, Sebo) translated as worship in our English Bibles. Use a Bible dictionary or the internet to learn about a few of these words to see what they were used to describe.

3. What was Isaiah’s reaction to being in the presence of God? (Isaiah 6:1-5). Why? Do you ever feel the same?


5. The Bible is clear in both the Old (Exodus 20:3) and New (Matthew 4:10) Testaments that God alone is worthy of worship. What are some ways that Christians can be guilty of worshipping other gods. Give examples.

6. In what ways was worship restricted under the Law of Moses? What changed that? (Hint- Matthew 27:51). What should be our attitude as we worship God today? (Ephesians 3:11-12, Hebrews 10:18-25).
7. Explain the benefits of worshipping together (Eph. 4:14-16; Heb. 10:23-25). Why might some people be turned off by group worship today? Are these problems with the worshipper? The group? Or both?

8. What are some ways that we can positively encourage people to join in our group worship?
Celebration

“Rejoice with those who rejoice…”  
(Romans 12:15)

1. Celebration may seem like an odd ending to a study of Spiritual disciplines but I believe a careful study of Scripture will show it to be very Biblical. Make a list of events that Godly individuals in the Bible celebrated.

2. What were some of the celebrations mandated under the Old Law? What events and occasions did these holidays celebrate?

3. How was Jesus’ entrance into the world announced? (Luke 2:10-15). What was the reaction of the Jewish crowds and children as He entered Jerusalem the final time? (Matt. 21:1-11). What was the mixed reaction of the women at the tomb after they discovered He had raised? (Matt. 28:8). What were the emotions and reactions of the first converts of the early church? (Acts 2:41-47).

4. What is the reaction in heaven when one sinner is found? (Luke 15:7, 10, 20-32). What should our reaction to this be?

5. The book of Philippians is an exciting book about celebration during persecution. Paul uses the word “joy” in one form or another 16 times in 4 chapters. Skim the book this week and list some things that Paul rejoiced in.
6. “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15). When is this an easy command to obey? When is it difficult?

7. List things that Christians can (and should) be celebrating today.

8. What do you think would be the practical effect if all the members of a church knew when and what to celebrate?