

The Christian Woman
A Woman's Devotional/spiritual Life

Part One: The First Three Disciplines -- Ruth Shelburne

Introduction: In this lesson we will study five fundamental spiritual disciplines necessary for a powerful spiritual relationship with God - Genesis 1:27.

- I. **DISCIPLINE #1 - God's Word** - the nature and practice of spiritual reading - Psalms 19:7-11
 - A. Hebrews 4:12,13 - The word reveals areas in our lives that need transforming.
 - B. Ephesians 6:17 - The sword penetrates our hearts and minds.
 - C. John 10:14 - The only way we can know God's voice is by knowing His word.
 - D. Psalms 119:105 - God's word guides us into all truth.
 - E. Psalms 119:11 - God's word keeps us from sinning against God.
 - F. Some principles for reading God's word:
 - 1. Give God the best time of your day.
 - 2. Choose a place to read.
 - 3. Read daily.
 - 4. Listen as you read.

- II. **DISCIPLINE #2 - Prayer**, Romans 8:26,27
 - A. Prayer gives a deeper relationship to God.
 - B. Prayer provides a place to unload our burdens - John 16:33, I Peter 5:7.
 - C. Prayer teaches us that God is always near - Psalms 46:1.
 - D. Prayer trains us not to panic - Luke 18:1, John 14:27.
 - E. Prayer changes lives.
 - F. Gives greater purity.
 - G. Gives confidence (Make no decision without prayer) - Acts 13:22.
 - H. Prayer improves relationships - Matthew 5:44.
 - I. Prayer gives us contentment - Psalms 84:11.
 - J. Intercessory prayer - 2 Chronicles 7:14.

- III. **DISCIPLINE #3 - Fasting**

- A. Fasting was common in Jewish culture and also in other cultures. It showed penitence and an humbling of oneself before God.
- B. Significant fasts
- C. Jesus expects us to fast. He did not say, "If you fast..." but "When you fast..." - Matthew 6:16-18.
- D. Fasting is a powerful tool in conjunction with prayer. It is a way of saying no to self and your own desires and interests for a time and putting God above everything else. It also helps develop discipline and self-control. And during fasting, personality traits may surface which need attention.

Part Two: Two More Important Disciplines B Kristine Reeves
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- I. Discipline #4 - **Worship** - gathered in the spirit.
 - A. Worship is the work of all the faithful who gather to praise, honor, and glorify God. Worship expresses a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, then a complete self-offering and willingness to listen for God's word and to give ourselves wholly to God's designs in the world. Read Philippians 2:5-11.
 - B. We know God to be wholly and pure, just and true, compassionate and loving. God is worthy to receive our praises and acclaim, worthy of our listening ears and offered hearts. We also worship because we were created to reflect and glorify the One in whose image we are made.
 - C. Worship ushers us into the presence of the living God.
 - D. Worship, public and private, is first and foremost a matter of the heart. Read Mark 12:29-30. Isaiah 29:13. If my son Jordan brought me a gift every week, because that's what he thought he was supposed to do, would I receive it with pleasure knowing that it did not come from the heart?
 - E. The need to gather (corporately). Many people think private worship is much more appealing than public worship. Why do they feel this way? More convenient, don't have to dress, watch TV, no accountability.
 - 1. Read Hebrews 10: 24-25. God uses His corporate body to speak into our lives and to help bring balance. Thus we fulfill the two greatest commands: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind soul and strength, and Love your neighbor as yourself.
 - 2. We gather for worship to remember who and whose we are. We are children of God and we belong exclusively to Him. When you spend time away from the family, you tend to forget who you are.
 - 3. Read John 17:21. When we come together for worship we express unity.
 - 4. Ways to help prepare ourselves for worship:

- a. Arrive 10-15 minutes early to distance ourselves from the mad rush we just went through to get to church.
- b. Be prepared to hear God speak to you. Remember it's the attitude we carry with us that determines how much we'll get out of something.
- c. Listen to the words of the hymns and songs for the meanings. Carefully listen to the words offered up during prayers.
- d. Give yourself freedom to respond freely in worship. If you agree with the message then nod your head or say amen. Feel free to use simple gestures, such as kneeling, bowing of head, lifting of hands, clapping, etc.

II. Discipline #5 - The spirit of **hospitality**. Read Matthew 25: 34-35.

- A. What are your most vivid memories of receiving hospitality? Of offering it?
- B. What is hospitality?
 - 1. Hospitality means receiving the other from the heart into my own home. It encompasses providing for the need, comfort, and delight of the other with all of the openness, respect, freedom, tenderness and joy that love itself embodies.
 - 2. Hospitality is essentially an expression of love. It is the act of sharing who we are as well as what we have, thus hospitality of the heart lies beneath every hospitable act.
- C. What are some elements of hospitality that we offer? Food, drink, shelter, rest, protection and care, enjoyment and peace. These elements range from physical to emotional and spiritual needs. They reveal that hospitality is concerned with the total well being of the guests.
- D. Often times when we are offering hospitality to our guests they gift us with their presence. We begin ministering to them and then we realize it is they who are ministering to us.
- E. Hospitality begins with God, depends on God and ends with God.
 - 1. His first act of hospitality to us was in creation. In the beginning He created the most beautiful home for us to live in. All of this was a gift to us, given to us for nourishment, and joy, given to our care to tend.

The most basic image of God's hospitality in creation is food. Sharing food is the primary expression of hospitality in human nature. What do you ask when someone stops in for a visit?
 - 2. God's second great act of divine hospitality was Christ. John 1:14 says the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. God came in person among us to forgive, reconcile and restore humans to the communion God intended. He came to heal us.

The lengths to which God will go to do that were revealed at the cross. On the

cross Jesus lives out His own parable of the father whose open arms gladly receive back a wayward child. Read Luke 15:11. Remember how the father in that story throws a lavish feast to celebrate his son's homecoming? Such a heart represents the essence of divine hospitality. In baptism God opens the door to the family house and says, "Welcome home my child."

God in Christ has received us into His own dwelling place where we find in plenty all we have need of in: forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, comfort, peace, joy, communion-abundant life for body and soul.

- F. Have you every thought about our hospitality to God? Martha of Bethany opened her home to Christ. Our first act of hospitality to God is to receive what God gives. How terrible for God to offer His grace so freely only for us to refuse it or ignore it.
- G. Then there is hospitality to one another. Our love for each other is a direct expression of our love for God. Look at some examples of hospitality as seen in the New Testament. Read Rom. 12:13, 1 Timothy 5:10, and 1Peter 4:9.

I pray that practicing one or more of these disciplines will make a difference in your lives.

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