

Blog, September 18, 2023: Seven Spiritual Disciplines

Hello, Saints and Saints-To-Be. Last week I shared with you all seven trends outside Biblical teachings that I believe places professed Christians in spiritual danger if they practice one or more of these un-Biblical trends. Those observations were presented with the understanding that, while we can judge behavior patterns and doctrine, we cannot judge the heart or salvation of any particular person. That is between God and the person. This e-mail flips the script toward the positive, and suggests seven spiritual disciplines that I believe will unleash God's power and increase the chance of many blessings in the Christian's life.

For me, spiritual disciplines ranks at the top of the priority list of life's activities. The Second Commandment and other Scriptures command us to place God and Jesus above everything else, especially potential idols. Although I am a sinner and very broken in many ways--with God's help, including amazing miracles via cancer, I strive to order the priorities in my life in the following way:

1. Spiritual Disciplines--highlighted below.
2. Health mitigation. That includes all medical followup issues plus healthy diet and exercise.
3. Family. That means quality time with my 2 sons, 2 grandsons, siblings (periodically as they are far away) and extended family.
4. Ministry calling. Unless God changes my calling, that includes bridging the racial divide in the Christian churches; education of the Biblical foundations for race relations; multi-ethnic Evangelism locally via mainly young adult outreach, and nationally via partnering with other Christian Evangelism organizations for Gospel saturation in different geographical areas; and Evangelism via free distribution of my Christian suspense novels. Ministry also includes advocacy on other important Biblically-supported issues, such as fighting modern slavery, standing for the human rights of unborn children, and protecting the rights and liberties of Christians from persecution by the secular sexual revolution movements. Those of us called in the racial reconciliation and justice movement need to support those Christians who emphasize the Biblical cultural issues. On the flip side, those fighting mainly for pro-life and religious liberty issues need to stand with multi-racial Christians on Biblical teachings for racial reconciliation, justice and unity. Often that is not happening, and that neglect or even misguided hostility to Biblical racial reconciliation and justice from sections of the "religious right" continues to weaken and divide the Christian church across the USA.
5. After that I find time for leisure and relaxing activities that could include reading, creative exercises, enjoying sporting activities, etc.

The seven spiritual disciplines that I believe the Bible calls us to follow are:

1. Bible reading every day. For me, I try to make it a priority early in the day, to demonstrate before God that I consider His Word more important than other life's activities and distractions. I try to close with Bible reading before I go to bed to highlight the importance of God, Jesus and Biblical truth while I spent several hours in bed (sometimes sleeping, oftentimes praying and listening to Christian radio because of frequent sleep disruptions as a cancer-related side effect).

2. Prayer. For me, that is not just some 5-10 minute obligation, so I can "check the box". Yes, I will pray early after I wake up. But then, during the day I will talk to God at different times even as I am doing other activities, because 1 Thessalonians 5 commands us to pray without ceasing.
3. Fellowship. Hebrews 10 commands us to be in close fellowship and friendship with other Christians. That is accomplished via the local church and followup activities, in smaller social connections and practicing other spiritual disciplines together. We need people for our emotional and spiritual health. Lone ranger Christians are ripe for Satanic attacks, often in the form of planting lies in our head and weakening our self esteem.
4. Praise and Worship. Why do so many Christians equate worship with music? Music is music, and just one aspect of worship. Praise and worship is singing, but also just thanking God and lifting Him up with the joy He has given us.
5. Mentoring and continuing learning. God expects us to be open to opportunities to disciple, encourage and equip in the faith other Christians. This is especially true for new Christians. Those new to the faith should be open to instruction and eagerly seek Biblical counsel to better serve Jesus in different activities. All Christians need to be open to learning Biblical tips and testimonies of each other to grow in the faith and the ability to serve God more effectively--and to avoid spiritual arrogance. Proverbs 27 references the importance of iron sharpening iron.
6. Evangelism. Matthew 28 commands us to share the Christian Gospel with people of all backgrounds to save the lost from eternal separation from God, expand God's kingdom and help transform societies for the better. Evangelism can be face to face or via tracts of written documents or public testimonies. We need to look for opportunities to share our faith--and the Holy Spirit has vividly reminded me when I have missed opportunities to share the Gospel. Almost all of us have friends, relatives, associates and neighbors (FRAN), and there are certainly some opportunities to convey this marvelous Biblical truth in love with our closest personal contacts. Also, social media should be used for Evangelism--not for gossip, narcissism or riding the wave of some secular movement.
7. Service. There are countless Scriptures about taking positive actions--including prayer but also concrete actions--in response to people in need whether they be victims of injustice, or dealing with poverty or other personal hardships and trials. This is not some "extra-curricular activity", a stepchild add-on; rather it is a core spiritual discipline, I believe. If we lack the time, money or health to actively serve, in most cases there are small opportunities to love and serve people. Forget Edison, et. al.; it was God who invented the telephone, the e-mail, Zoom, text messages and the computer with its many modes of communication--as alternatives if we cannot be more active due to our limiting circumstances.

I hope and pray that this e-mail provides a few nuggets of encouragement to each of you, as we minister to people--all people of any race, ethnicity or nationality. I wish each of you blessings, and that autumn will be bring health, spiritual blessings and fun for all of you. Fun does not have to be sinful, and we need fun and laughter in our lives.

Peace and out.

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