

Don't Waste Your Isolation

Episode 9

During this time of social separation, many of us are using our time for spiritual endeavors which we were not doing, or at least not doing faithfully or regularly, prior to our isolation. So I encourage you, and I'd command you, require it of you, if I had the authority to do so, is to make sure you are making plans to keep pursuing these spiritually healthy and important activities when you return to normal life.

God does nothing without a purpose. And if, during this time you have reevaluated, reprioritized, or revamped your daily routine in a way that increases your daily sanctification and increases your love for Jesus, why would you go back to the way things were before? Why squander the grace you've been given? And if you have neglected to use this time for greater spiritual growth, why on earth have you made this choice?

“Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance” (1 Timothy 4:7-9 ESV).

I submit to you that you can, and should, think of your life and the many important tasks you do every day, tasks you are to do to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31), in the same way Paul uses bodily training in his example. Important, and of some value, maybe of great value, but in comparison to time spent in training yourself for godliness its value is limited.

Wait . . . do I hear a rumbling of grumbling? Might you be in opposition to my proposition? Maybe you're thinking “Has God not called me to be a mom (or a

dad, an employee/employer, a student, a child, grandparent, etc.) and does not that calling take up the majority of my time each day? Maybe I'm not working as much, or driving the kids around as much, or travelling as much, but when things do get back to normal I just won't have the time to be so spiritual!"

There is truth to this objection, but not complete truth. Consider with me how much more fruitful your job of being a mother or father, a student or child, an employee or employer, will be if you continue to "train yourself for godliness" in a more full and faithful way when you return to your "normal" life. God will get more glory. Your mothering will be more beneficial to your kids. Your employer will gain a more productive employee. All because you are spending more time training for godliness "which holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."

So how, exactly, should you spend your time if you are training for godliness? I'm glad you asked! Spend time in the spiritual disciplines. Discipline, or train, yourself to live in a way that aids your sanctification and increases your love for Christ.

I don't intend to write each day on a different discipline, nor do I intend to defend each one. As Covenant Members of the Bible Church you are often admonished toward practicing these disciplines in our preaching and teaching. I've given away books on the spiritual disciplines and we have a library with titles on the spiritual disciplines.

But I am also aware that we all need reminders. Reminders to hold fast, to persevere as we follow Christ. Consider how Peter begins his 2nd letter:

"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through

them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder” (2 Peter 1:3-13 ESV).

As you train yourself for the purpose of godliness you should:

Consume God’s word—Do this through reading, hearing, meditating, memorizing, studying, and applying the Scriptures. Consume God’s word daily.

Pray—Pray without ceasing, says Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Pray through Scripture as you consume the word. Pray with faith that God answers. Be watchful for God to answer your prayers and pray some more with your thanksgiving. Pray by yourself, pray with your family, pray with others (online and by phone during this time of Isolation), tell others you prayed for them. Just pray.

Worship—Did you know the word “worship” appears 180 in the ESV referring to both true & false worship? You should worship God individually, with your family, and with the church corporately. Worship in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24), in the splendor of holiness (Psalm 29:2; 96:9).

Deny Yourself—Jesus put it plainly: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” Following Jesus requires self-denial. Several of the spiritual disciplines fall into a category of denying yourself, including fasting, serving, and giving (or stewardship).

There are other spiritual disciplines, but this will serve as a reminder and encouragement for now. If you’d like to read more I recommend:

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life Revised Edition by Donald S. Whitney (NAVPRESS: 2014).

Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines by David Mathis (Crossway: 2016).

Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ by Donald S. Whitney (Moody: 1996).

Because of Christ,
Pastor Rob
