**The Purpose of the Spiritual Disciplines: GODLINESS**

**Lesson 1: Pastor Duane**

“Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without personal repentance; it is baptism without the discipline of community; it is the Lord’s Supper without the confession of sins; it is absolution without personal confession. ***Cheap grace is grace without discipleship,*** grace without the cross, grace without the living, incarnate Christ.” ~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“Christianity has not so much been tried and found wanting, as it has been found difficult and left untried.” ~ G.K. Chesterton

But what about Jesus saying, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” ~ Matthew 11:29-30

But costly discipleship must not be left to stand as the whole truth. We would do far better to lay clear, constant emphasis upon the cost of *non-discipleship* as well. As Søren Kierkegaard reminds us, “It costs a man just as much or even more to go to hell than to come to heaven. Narrow, exceedingly narrow is the way of perdition!”

 1 Timothy 4:7 “Discipline yourself for the **purpose** of godliness.”

This verse is the theme of this entire Sunday School class. In this session I will attempt to unpack its meaning; the rest of the sessions will be an effort to apply it in practical ways. We will refer to the scriptural ways Christians discipline themselves in obedience to this verse as the Spiritual Disciplines. We will maintain that the only road to Christian maturity and godliness passes through the practice of the Spiritual Disciplines. We will emphasize that godliness is the goal of the Disciplines, and when we remember this, the Spiritual Disciplines become a delight instead of some type of drudgery.

1. What are the Spiritual Disciplines?

The Spiritual Disciplines are those personal and corporate disciplines that promote spiritual growth. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced since biblical times.

1. Whatever the Discipline, its most important feature is its purpose.

Just like there is little value in practicing the scales on a guitar or piano apart from the purpose of playing music, there is little value in practicing Spiritual Disciplines apart from the single purpose that unites them (Colossians 2:20-23; 1 Timothy 4:8). THAT PURPOSE IS GODLINESS!

1. Godly people are a disciplined people!

This has always been true. Call to mind some heroes of church history – Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Bunyan, Susanna Wesley, George Whitfield, Lady Huntingdon, Jonathan and Sarah Edwards, Charles Sprugeon, George Muller – they were all disciplined people. In my own pastoral and personal experience, I can say that I’ve never known a man or woman who came to spiritual maturity except through discipline. Godliness always comes through discipline.

1. God uses three primary ways of changing us and conforming us into the image of Jesus, but only one is largely under our control.
2. The Lord uses people to change us (Proverbs 27:17)
3. The Lord uses circumstances to change us (Romans 8:28)
4. Then there is the Spiritual Disciplines. This catalyst differs from the first two in that when He uses the Disciplines, God works from the inside out.
5. The word translated “discipline” in 1 Timothy 4:7 is the Greek word *gumnasia* from which our English words *gymnasium* and *gymnastics* derive. So, the word means “to exercise or discipline.” Think of the Spiritual Disciplines as spiritual exercise.
6. Jesus expects us to practice the Spiritual Disciplines.
7. Luke 9:23 (cf. Galatians 5:22-23)
8. Jesus modeled these disciplines in His own life and ministry (cf. Philippians 2:1-11)

“It (grace) is costly because it calls to discipleship; it is grace, because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly, because it costs people their lives; it is grace, because it thereby makes them live. It is costly, because it condemns sin; it is grace, because it justifies the sinner. Above all grace is costly, because it was costly to God, because it costs God the life of God’s Son and because nothing can be cheap to us which was costly to God.” ~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer