

Drawing
near to
GOD
through

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES



WRITTEN BY: Stacie Taylor

*Since we live by the Spirit,
let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*

Galatians 5:25 NIV

God's Word tells us that the Holy Spirit's leading in our lives - that we "live by the Spirit" - is evidence that we are children of God (Romans 8:14-17). Throughout the New Testament and above in Paul's letter to the church in Galatia, we see Christians urged to live in a way that is consistent with the Spirit of God at work in us.

In this encouragement, Paul uses the phrase "keep in step." But what does that mean? Scripture makes clear that God is the one who brings the growth in our lives (Philippians 2:13, 1 Corinthians 3:7, Hebrews 12:2), but it also clearly calls us to actively live out our faith (James 1:22) and to "train ourselves for Godliness" (1 Timothy 4:8). So how do we reconcile these things? James, the brother of Jesus, gives us a good summary of how those things work together:

*Come close to God, and God will come close to you.
Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your
loyalty is divided between God and the world.*
James 4:8

James 4 teaches us a few things:

First, Christians have a responsibility to seek God, or "draw near" to Him as the ESV Bible translates this verse. In this passage, James is warning believers to seek God so they may avoid falling into the same old patterns of destruction they'd followed before or giving in to temptations. He explains in verse 7 that we are to submit ourselves to God - to willingly surrender any power we believe we have to Him, and then to come close to Him from that place of humility.

Second, God is faithful to reveal more of Himself to us when we seek Him (Jeremiah 29:13) and He is faithful to deepen our intimacy with Him when we draw near to Him.

Third, we see that coming close to God is a way that we can wash our hands and purify our hearts so we can address the divide we have in our human nature that continuously battles between our own desires and the desires God has for us (Romans 7:14-25).

So, knowing that God is the one who works in us - even as He empowers us to come close to Him - how can we do our part of drawing near? I think Colossians 3:16-17 lays out a model for 3 types of spiritual disciplines, or actions we practice to draw near to God and walk in step with His Spirit. The Bible shows us specific ways we can practice those, which are listed below each type and described through the lens of scripture.

Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives.

Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives.

Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.

And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

-Colossians 3:16-17

This passage
calls believers to:

LISTEN to God

RESPOND to God

SHARE God's goodness & glory

Listen

Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives... (v.16a)

READ God's Word

for broader knowledge of His will.

In order for the message of Christ to fill our lives, we have to know it and to know it well. The first step to that is taking in God's Word. This can include reading on your own in a printed Bible, on your computer, or on a phone app. You can also take in God's Word audibly through recordings or sermons.

Colossians 1:9-10, Romans 10:8-17, 2 Corinthians 4:6

STUDY God's Word

for a deeper understanding of His will.

Try taking notes in a journal, using a study Bible, or writing questions and observations in your Bible's margins. Start with a book of the Bible and work through it: get the main idea, ask questions, draw connections, take note of things the passage tells you about God's character & story.

Psalms 25:4-5, Hebrews 4:12, 2 Timothy 3:14-17, 1 Peter 3:15

DWELL ON God's Word

for wisdom to live out His will.

Great ways to meditate, or dwell deeply in thought, on scripture include repeating verses aloud, writing them + placing them in places you'll see often, listing observations about them, or practicing them for the purpose of memorization.

Psalms 1:1-3, Psalm 19, Philippians 4:8, Psalm 119:11, Joshua 1:8, Romans 12:2

Respond

Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts...giving thanks through him to God the Father. (v. 16b)

PRAY

Here is a good model we get from Jesus' teaching (Matthew 6:9-13) for things to include in prayer:

Adoration...to delight in His glory

Confession...to own up to our sins, doubts, and fears + to turn TO God and FROM distractions

Thanksgiving...to cultivate a thankful heart

Supplication...to make requests of God

You can pray in your head, out loud, by writing word-for-word in a notebook, writing bulleted lists, or even typing on your phone. And you can pray anywhere! At any time. Christians have 24/7, full access to God through Christ's perfect life, atoning (paying for our sins) death, and glorious resurrection on our behalf.

Hebrews 10:19-22, 1 John 5:14, Ephesians 6:18, Matthew 26:41, 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18

Respond

PRAISE

- With a **SONG**
- With a **SINCERE HEART**
- With **TRUST IN** and **REVERENCE FOR** who God is

To praise or worship God means recognizing God's glory and responding with joy and reverence to it. Try singing your own songs to God, listening to worship music, singing along with worship music, playing an instrument, or even creating your own dance.

Romans 12:1-2, Hebrews 12:28, Psalm 100, John 4:23-24

TAKE A BREAK

- ...from the crowd and the noise (**SILENCE + SOLITUDE**)
- ...from work ("**SABBATH**" or **REST**)
- ...from specific distractions for the purpose of discipline and focus (**FASTING**)

Silence and solitude can happen anywhere, and rest can go hand-in-hand with those, or it can look like taking a break to do an activity that is not "work" to you. Fasting can be abstaining from anything that distracts you from God, for a fixed period of time, with the purpose of focusing on God - this could be anything from food (if it is in a safe way for your mind and body) to social media or time with a boyfriend.

Matthew 6:6, Luke 4:42, Psalm 46:10, Matthew 6:5-18, Matthew 11:28-30

Share

Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives.... And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus... (v.16b, 17)

GATHER

- LISTENING and RESPONDING to God alongside other Christians
- Encouraging other Christians (and being encouraged) in love + truth
- Supporting one another in trials

Gathering with other believers to hear God's Word proclaimed and explained, to study it together, and to live it out together is essential to our growth in faith. This can include faithfully meeting with your local church, studying the Bible in a small group within your church or other groups of like-minded believers in your life, and making time to regularly fellowship, or spend time with, your friends who are Christians so you can genuinely build one another up, pray, and "bear one another's burdens."

1 Thessalonians 5:11-15, Hebrews 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:1-7, 25-32



Share

SERVE

- Demonstrating + reflecting God's sacrificial love to other Christians
- Demonstrating + reflecting God's sacrificial love to anyone and everyone

Serving means humbly giving your time, resources, or gifts to meet needs or build others up. This could look like signing up to work a rotation in a ministry area at your church, volunteering with an organization in your community, or going out of your way to reach out to hurting peers.

Mark 10:45, Galatians 5:13-14, John 12:26

TELL

...telling others the Good News of Christ (GOD'S STORY)

...telling others what God has done specifically in your life (YOUR STORY or GOD'S STORY IN YOU)

The whole Bible is God's story of His holy, perfect, redeeming love and our invitation to find new life in Him through Christ. Christians get to enjoy in Him and tell everyone we meet how knowing Him has changed our lives. Jesus is Good News, and He has given every Christian a unique story to share.

Matthew 28:19-20, Psalm 96:3, Psalm 145:4-5

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLES

LISTEN

RESPOND

SHARE

READ

STUDY

DWELL

PRAY

PRAISE

TAKE A
BREAK

GATHER

SERVE

TELL

Am I Doing
This
Already?
How?

Tools +
Resources I
Have Now

What's
Missing?

When &
Where
I Could
Practice

How I Can
Start This
Week

