

Sermon Study Guide
Week #1: Introduction to
the Spiritual Disciplines



36 weeks
2008-2009 westport community



Introduction to Spiritual Disciplines – Crave Study Guide

Big Idea: Don't be afraid or intimidated, practice them to change...

Have you ever prayed? Ever gone off alone and talked with God, maybe on a hike or just driving in your car, no noise, just the road? Have you ever spent quality time with another follower of Jesus? How about singing --open-hearted-- in a church service? If you said yes to any of these, then surprise, you've participated in the spiritual disciplines.

When I think about the term, "Spiritual Discipline" I'm intimidated. My mind conjures up images of monks in the fourth century living on bread and water, spending their days gardening. Monastics did practice Spiritual Disciplines, their lives reflecting devotion to God. For those of us who don't feel called to the monastic life, the disciplines will look a lot like our life now with the subtle difference that it will be more intentional. Here are some examples of disciplines you may have already engaged in:

1. Learning to play the piano.
2. Treating others with kindness when you don't feel like it.
3. Learning to drive a car.
4. Making it to work on time day after day.
5. Telling the truth when it hurts.
6. ...
7. ...

Add examples from your life.

What do all of these have in common? What makes them "disciplines?" Does **desire** play a role how you approach them?

If we are going to play the piano we have to submit to the keys, the notes, the instructor. If we do that, over time, we forget about the keys and just start playing. We've become a piano player. That's where the freedom to really play expresses itself. Engaging in the spiritual disciplines of solitude and silence, prayer and fasting, worship and study, fellowship and confession and the like, changes us to become people who live with Christ, following his

commands. Submitting to His commands changes us into the people we were designed to be. Truly free, living in fellowship with God's Spirit.

"If you love me, keep my commands," Jesus said, "and I will ask the Father to send you another strengthener, the Spirit of truth" (John 14:15-17).

Can you think of some of the commands Jesus gave us. Name a few.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
4. "Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, soul, mind and strength."
5. "Be anxious for nothing."
6. "Love you neighbor as yourself."

Can you by your own strength "be anxious for nothing?" What if the difference in the spiritual life between "Effort" and "Earning"? Why is that important?

What happens if we fall into Externalism? How do we prevent that?

Action: What discipline would you like to engage in this week to create a space to be with Christ? Share amongst your group.