

Copyright © 2023 Dale Wayne Pinkley Jr.

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation or instruction.

EQUIPPING THE EIGHTH GRADE BOYS AT IMMANUEL
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL IN SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA,
TO UNDERSTAND AND PRACTICE
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Educational Ministry

by
Dale Wayne Pinkley Jr.
May 2023

APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING THE EIGHTH GRADE BOYS AT IMMANUEL
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL IN SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA
TO UNDERSTAND AND PRACTICE
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Dale Wayne Pinkley Jr.

Read and Approved by:

Faculty Supervisor: Matthew D. Haste

Second Reader: Kevin M. Jones

Defense Date: December 20, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	v
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Context	1
Rationale	3
Purpose	5
Goals	5
Research Methodology	6
Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations	7
Conclusion	8
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR EQUIPPING EIGHTH GRADE BOYS TO UNDERSTAND AND PRACTICE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES	9
Psalm 1:1-3: “Delight in the Lord”	9
Second Timothy 3:16-17: “Sufficiency of Scripture”	16
First Timothy 4:7-12: “Time to Train”	20
Titus 2:1-6: “Instructions for Men”	26
Conclusion	31
3. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED TO YOUNG MEN DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES	32
Defining Biblical Discipleship	32
Role of Spiritual Disciplines in the Spiritual Growth of Young Men	37

Chapter	Page
Educational Philosophy on How Boys Learn	48
Conclusion	55
4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT	57
Project Preparation	57
Project Implementation	59
5. MINISTRY PROJECT EVALUATION	76
Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose	76
Evaluation of the Project’s Goals	76
Strengths of the Project	78
Weaknesses of the Project	80
What I Would Do Differently	81
Theological Reflections	82
Personal Reflections	83
Conclusion	85
 Appendix	
1. SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES SURVEY	86
2. CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC	90
3. BIBLE STUDY PRACTICE SHEET	92
4. ACTS PRAYER WORKSHEET	94
5. BIBLE MEMORIZATION STEPS	96
6. KAHOOT SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES REVIEW	98
7. T-TEST RESULTS: ALL QUESTIONS	101
BIBLIOGRAPHY	102

PREFACE

This project could not be completed without the love and support from many people in my life. First, I must thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for his saving grace. I am constantly amazed at his love for me. The awe for his unending love drives most of my passion for this project.

Second, I thank the Lord for my godly heritage. My Grandpa and Grandma Pinkley loved Jesus and taught my father and his siblings about the wonders and grace of God. This upbringing encouraged my dad to marry a godly woman, and I was blessed to be raised by two godly loving parents. They raised me to love Jesus first and love others second. Their unwavering love and encouragement have helped keep me true to the Christian faith.

Third, I would not be where I am spiritually without the support of godly men God has placed in my life. I thank God for Kent Wallace and Wes Smith. Both of these men were youth leaders while I was in youth group. Since that time, they have been available when I have sought advice about life situations. They continue to live their life in a way that is an example for me to follow. I also am thankful for Pastor James Turner. Pastor Turner was my pastor during my high school and college years. He was always available to answer my questions and I will never forget the summer of 1998 when he met with me weekly and allowed me to ask him any question. I learned a great deal about following and trusting Jesus during those times together. My seminary professor, Dr. Jay Sedwick, also deserves my gratitude as he instilled in me a passion for young people and teaching them truth. To these men I owe a debt of gratitude that I can only hope to repay by pouring into the next generation of boys.

Finally, words do not do justice for how grateful I am for my wife. Sarah's constant love and encouragement blow me away. She is the best gift, besides salvation, that God could give me. I am thankful for her unwavering support during my doctoral studies. She has sacrificed much to allow me time to finish this project. She is a great mom to Isaac, Naomi, and Kemloveson, and I appreciate her heart for teaching them to love Jesus.

It is my hope that this project will develop spiritual disciplines in the lives of the eighth grade boys at Immanuel Christian School so they will grow into men that love and serve Jesus.

Dale W. Pinkley Jr.

Springfield, Virginia

May 2023

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose statement of Immanuel Christian School is to partner with families to inspire students for purposeful lives of learning, godliness, and service. The ultimate goal of this partnership is to see students choose Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and to grow in their personal relationship with Him. Developing spiritual disciplines is an avenue to help students grow in their faith (Prov 22:6). Growing in one's spiritual disciplines also helps build relationships between more mature believers and younger followers of Jesus as they hold each other accountable (Prov 27:17). Immanuel Christian School desires to develop a spiritual disciplines curriculum focused on its eighth-grade boys to help them grow into godly men and make a difference for Jesus in their lifetime.

Context

Immanuel Christian School (ICS) opened its doors in Springfield, Virginia, in 1976. As a ministry of Immanuel Bible Church, ICS has partnered with Christian families for over four decades and has grown to a student body of over 580 students. Twelve years ago, the school board noticed the changing culture and what was being taught in the public schools and college campuses. While ICS is a nationally recognized Blue Ribbon school, the school board did not rest on this achievement. The decision was made to follow God's lead in starting a high school that would equip students to think biblically and critically about issues of the day, preparing them for college or the workforce. Throughout the years, ICS has built a reputation for its Christ-like nurturing and caring environment.

This reputation is due to relationships within the school and the discipleship that takes place with the students. First, the relationships of those on the administrative team are genuine. Many have served together for over a decade. I am currently in my thirteenth year at the school. I taught fifth grade for one year and have served as the Assistant Head of School for the last twelve years. Second, the faculty and staff care greatly for each other. Oftentimes, in the middle of the workday, staff members can be seen praying together. The relationships the staff members have with each other speaks volumes to the families who put their students in the school. These positive working relationships flow down to the families and students. Teachers love teaching at ICS and enjoy being in the classroom. They not only teach academic subjects, but they teach them from a biblical perspective. As they get to know their students, they learn what motivates them and how to best reach each child. Relationships are built with parents to develop a unified team in the education of the child. For example, two years ago the staff was made aware that one of the high school students had a growing tumor that had returned. Within twenty-four hours, the parents were contacted by many of her teachers and by me. While this is not required or part of teacher training, it points to the heart of the teachers as they care for the well-being of their students.

Discipleship is also present in the halls of ICS. The K-8 students attend Bible class multiple days a week as well as a weekly chapel program. The high school starts every day with a thirty-minute Bible class. The goal is that the Bible is not just another subject students learn but that biblical knowledge permeates every subject being taught. In the recent past, the former Head of School selected a “bonus verse” for the year. Students were encouraged to memorize these verse(s) and then have lunch with the Head of School to recite and discuss what it means. Scripture memory is one spiritual discipline that ICS does well. Over the years, parents have shared how much they appreciated the Head of School investing in the lives of their sons or daughters by having these lunch discussions. Discipleship also takes place through the principals. Whenever a

student needs to spend time with the principal because of a poor decision, the principal focuses not on the behavior but on the heart of the student. This discipleship is vital in helping students learn and grow from a biblical perspective. While some spiritual disciplines are present at ICS, the administration can improve curriculum to include a well-rounded teaching of spiritual disciplines and how to live them out. A deliberate spiritual disciplines program is needed. When spiritual disciplines are understood and practiced, students have a better chance to grow into the godly men and women God created them to be for such a time as this.

Rationale

While the Bible clearly states that it is the parent's job to disciple their children, it is important for young believers, especially boys, to learn and develop spiritual disciplines from others as well. The passion for following Jesus varies greatly among ICS families. Some families have a strong passion to teach their children to follow Jesus while others do not. One father at ICS shared that his family does not go to church and wants the school to provide the religious education of his child. One of the biggest challenges ICS faces is how to help boys integrate what they learn in class into their daily lives. Sometimes the young men will post something on social media that is disappointing because it appears what they are being taught in school is not being applied to decision making outside of the classroom. Teaching in a classroom setting provides opportunities to share why practicing spiritual disciplines is important. There will be times during a school day when a teacher can share practical examples of how spiritual disciplines can be beneficial to a student as he learns to grow in his faith. Developing a spiritual disciplines program for the eighth-grade boys will help them understand that living for Jesus affects every area of their life and not just the "religious" part of their being. ICS is an optimal place to develop a spiritual disciplines program for young men.

First, Scripture is clear that spiritual disciplines are essential to spiritual growth of young men. Paul states in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and

profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”¹ God’s written revelation has the only unchanging truthful explanation of why it is important for young boys to develop spiritual disciplines. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Young men need training specifically geared toward them. Developing spiritual disciplines is important during the pre-teen and teenage years because the Bible says children will not depart from how they have been trained. The Bible continues by saying, “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Prov 27:17). Spiritual disciplines encourage boys to hold each other accountable and to spur on one another in following Jesus. Training boys to develop spiritual disciplines will also help them make wise decisions. Proverbs 13:20 says, “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.” With so many influences impacting young men, the more grounded they are in what they believe, the better.

Second, as secular culture seeks to paint the Christian worldview as narrow-minded and bigoted, spiritual disciplines are pivotal in teaching young men how to stand for truth. Standing up for the right way to live and against the wrong way is not popular. Chastisement and ridicule will inundate young men if they speak up against the evils in the world. To fight against this onslaught on truth, young men need to be taught spiritual disciplines so they can stand for truth. Boys need to care enough for others to speak and live the truth. The Bible calls men to lead by example. They can only do this by developing spiritual disciplines. Paul tells a young Timothy, “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:12). Even at a young age, boys can set the example. By developing spiritual disciplines young men can grow up and be leaders in their home. First Corinthians 11:3 says, “But I

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version.

want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.” Ephesians 6:4 looks at how a man is to lead by how he relates to his children: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Boys in eighth grade also need to study godly men who lived out their faith by having spiritual disciplines in their life. Young men need to learn about recent men of the faith, such as William Wilberforce, John Perkins, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Jim Elliott, and John Wesley just to name a few. They need role models.

Third, the American public educational system does not teach Christian spiritual disciplines. Students may learn about being positive or treating others with respect, but what is being taught is not tied back to Scripture. As boys get older, they will face challenges in living out their faith, but they will have a solid foundation of knowing what they believe, why they believe it, and how to live it out. There will likely be times when they feel alone and struggle with what to believe. Developing a spiritual disciplines curriculum will help the boys put roots on their faith as they grow into young men.

A deliberate Christ-filled spiritual disciplines program is needed to invest in the next generation of young men. They need to develop godly disciplines to help them stay the course. While negative influences pull young men in many directions, spiritual disciplines can significantly impact whether they continue walking with the Lord or walk away from their faith.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the eighth-grade boys at Immanuel Christian School to understand and practice spiritual disciplines.

Goals

Three goals were needed for the successful completion of this project. When the goals were completed in order, a solid spiritual disciplines curriculum would be in

place for the eighth-grade boys at Immanuel Christian School. These goals were designed to help develop an understanding and desire to practice spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith.

1. The first goal was to assess the understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines among the eighth-grade boys at Immanuel Christian School.
2. The second goal was to develop an eight-week curriculum to teach the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, prayer, worship, Bible memorization, evangelism, and serving.
3. The third goal was to increase the understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines among the eighth-grade boys at Immanuel Christian School by teaching the eight-week curriculum.

A specific research methodology was created to measure the successful completion of these three goals. This methodology is described in the following section.

Research Methodology

Three goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to assess the understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines among the eighth-grade boys at Immanuel Christian School. A Spiritual Disciplines Assessment (SDA)² was given to a select group of male students in the eighth grade to gauge each boy's initial level of understanding and practicing of spiritual disciplines. This goal was considered successfully met when at least twelve boys from eighth grade, or 80 percent of the boys in eighth grade, completed the assessment and the results had been compiled electronically for a fuller analysis of biblical knowledge and life application.

The second goal was to develop an eight-week spiritual disciplines curriculum for the eighth-grade boys at Immanuel Christian School. This curriculum covered basic spiritual disciplines such as Bible study, prayer, worship, Bible memorization, evangelism, and service. The curriculum was taught in the fall of the 2022-2023 school year. This

² See appendix 1. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use.

curriculum was designed for one, forty-minute session per week. The curriculum primarily focused on biblical reasons why spiritual disciplines are important and how to practice each discipline. This goal was measured by an expert panel consisting of two ICS male Bible teachers, two ICS male administrators, one Immanuel Bible Church pastor, the junior and senior high youth directors at IBC, and the former Head of School at ICS. This panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the curriculum to ensure it was biblically accurate, biblically age-appropriate, and relevant to the male students.³ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. Should the initial feedback yield less than 90 percent, then the curriculum would be revised in accordance with the panel's evaluation until such time that the criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to increase the understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines among the eighth-grade boys at Immanuel Christian School by teaching the eight-week spiritual disciplines curriculum. This goal was measured by giving the SDA again to compare the change in spiritual disciplines knowledge. The goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definition of a key term is used in the ministry project:

Spiritual disciplines. This project uses Donald Whitney's definition of *spiritual discipline*: "Practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ."⁴ This project focuses on the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, prayer, worship, Bible memorization, evangelism and service.

One limitation applied to this project: the time allotted to me to teach during

³ See appendix 1.

⁴ Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for a Godly Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 4.

the school day. While the students have a full daily schedule, I would not have much time to focus on the teaching material.

One main delimitation applied to this project. I only worked with eighth-grade male students. The purpose of this delimitation was to limit the scope to a reasonable group of students. I selected the eighth-grade boys for this project because I wanted the young men to have the spiritual disciplines taught in a way that was interesting and memorable to them.

Conclusion

Spiritual disciplines are needed to help every believer become more like Christ. The following chapters will show how spiritual disciplines help young boys grow into the men God created them to be. Chapter 2 will focus on Scripture's reasons for developing spiritual disciplines, and chapter 3 will look at how biblical discipleship and educational philosophy play a role in the development of spiritual disciplines in a young man's life. Chapter 4 will review the implementation of my project, and chapter 5 will be the evaluation of my project.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR
EQUIPPING EIGHTH GRADE BOYS TO
UNDERSTAND AND PRACTICE
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Equipping the next generation to follow Jesus Christ is an endeavor taught in God's Word. Scripture is clear that older believers are to teach, equip, and encourage younger believers in the faith. To help younger believers grow in the faith, spiritual disciplines need to be understood and practiced. In this chapter, four passages will be used to show how God's Word guides and benefits the development of spiritual gifts in the lives of young men.¹ First, Psalm 1:1-3 shares how believers find their delight in the Lord. Second, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 states that Scripture is profitable for equipping others and growing as a believer in Jesus. Third, Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:7-12 to lead by example by disciplining himself for godliness. Last, Paul states in Titus 2:1-6 that older men are to lead by example and young men are to be self-controlled.

Psalm 1:1-3: "Delight in the Lord"

Understanding the depths of one's sin and the amazing grace offered by Jesus is the beginning of the realization that developing spiritual disciplines is needed. Psalm 1:1-3 shares what believers do not do and then, in contrast, what they do to be close to the Lord:

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

¹ Most of the passages used in this project address Christian discipleship in general. I will be focusing on the spiritual growth of young men for this project.

The believer's delight should be in the Law of the Lord. This delight is not out of drudgery; it is a joy to study the Scriptures to know God better and learn what pleases the Savior. Willem A. VanGemeren states, "Psalm 1 holds forth the blessedness of godliness, encouraging the godly to pursue the way of God over against the way of the world."² This didactic Psalm is a wisdom Psalm that guides believers in how to find delight in the Lord. To emphasize the contrast between the wicked and righteous, Richard Clifton points out, "The righteous person is in the singular number and the wicked are in the plural number in order to maximize the contrast between them."³

The first section of the verse starts with the word "blessed." Tom Constable points out that "happy" is a better translation than "blessed" since the Hebrew language has a separate word for "blessed."⁴ Thomas Constable says, "This term is used 26 times in the Psalter. This blessedness is not deserved but is a gift from God. Even when the righteous do not feel happy they are blessed from God's perspective because He protects them from judgment resulting from the Fall."⁵ VanGemeren states, "The formula 'blessed is the man' evokes joy and gratitude, as man may live in fellowship with his God."⁶ Joy can be found in living in fellowship with God. Joy turns to gratitude for all God has done for a believer when he stays away from evil and turns to what is good. The beginning of verse 1 continues with three things a blessed or happy believer does not do. First, he is blessed if he does not walk in the counsel of the wicked. The verb "walk" signifies how

² Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, *Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 52.

³ Richard J. Clifford, *Psalms 1-72*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 39.

⁴ Thomas Constable, *Job-Song of Solomon*, Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, vol. 3 (Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2012), 63.

⁵ Constable, *Job-Song of Solomon*, 63.

⁶ VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 53.

one lives when following the advice of the ungodly.⁷ This can be seen as the first step to someone headed in a direction that is not God-honoring. Allen P. Ross shares, “What may start as a harmless bit of advice from an unbeliever may end up with a dangerously close connection to those who want to destroy the faith.”⁸ Believers must have a discerning spirit when receiving advice from unbelievers. The term “wicked” refers to people who do not care that they are doing evil things. They have no desire to do what is right in the eyes of God.

Blessed Is the Man Who Does Not

Psalm 1 continues by saying that a blessed man does not stand in the way of sinners. The term “sinners” in this verse refers to those who are failing to live up to God’s standards.⁹ Ross says that the word “stand” “indicates considering the lifestyle of a sinner.”¹⁰ While the lifestyle of a sinner may be appealing, a blessed man understands and knows that true happiness is not envying a sinner’s lifestyle.

Psalm 1:1 concludes with the third aspect of living that a blessed man does not do. A blessed man does not sit in the seat of scoffers. A scoffer is one who has no regard for following Christ. His disdain for Christianity leads him to “make light of God’s laws and ridicule what is sacred.”¹¹ Proverbs 24:9 states, “The devising of folly is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to mankind.” Proverbs 21:24 describes scoffers well: “Scoffer is the name of the arrogant, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride.” Scoffers are an abomination, and a believer should not be found spending time with them. Nancy deClaisse-Walford explains, “This verbal progression (walk, stand, sit) depicts a regression

⁷ Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*: vol. 1, *Psalms 1-41*. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 187.

⁸ Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 187.

⁹ Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 187.

¹⁰ Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 187.

¹¹ Constable, *Job-Song of Solomon*, 63.

from moving—to stationary—to sitting. Perhaps the idea is that sin is a temptation that one first tries out, later becomes accustomed to, and finally becomes a habit or lifestyle.”¹²

Blessed Is the Man Who Does

Psalm 1 starts with three things a blessed man does not do, but quickly changes course to what a blessed man does do. A blessed man has delight, and that delight is found in the law of the Lord. To delight in the law of the Lord, one must know what the law of the Lord is before he can find delight in it. In this passage, the law of the Lord could refer to two sections of Scripture. Some believe that the ‘Law of the Lord’ refers only to the Torah—Genesis through Deuteronomy. While these five books are considered the Torah, others believe ‘the Law of the Lord’ in this passage refers to all of Scripture. VanGemeren states, “The ‘law’ is not to be limited to the Five Books of Moses or even to the Old Testament as a whole. The Hebrew word *torah* (“law”) signifies primarily instruction that comes from God.”¹³ When looking at these two possibilities, it appears the second is more widely believed.

A believer should find delight in the Law of the Lord. VanGemeren explains, “The believer’s delight is not only in knowing, studying, and memorizing the Word of God but especially in *doing* God’s will, rather than being deceived by the wicked.”¹⁴ Believers are to find delight in learning *and* doing the things of God. Their focus is on the things of God, not on what entices the wicked, sinners, and scoffers. Joy and peace can be found when focus is on the Law of the Lord. David expressed his belief in the invaluable riches of the Scriptures when he said in Psalm 19:7-10,

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the lord is clean,

¹² Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book Of Psalms*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 60.

¹³ VanGemeren *Psalms*, 54.

¹⁴ VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 55.

enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

God's laws, precepts, and commandments are sweeter than honey and should be desired more than gold.

The law should always be on the mind of a believer. Whether day or night, his focus is on knowing and doing what the Scriptures command. The Hebrew word for meditates is the verb *hagah*. *Hagah* means “to murmur or mutter and alludes to the sound of animals or a moaning noise.”¹⁵ The Law is always on the tip of the tongue and in the thoughts of the believer. The term “meditation” is not a set-apart time for a believer to think about godly things. Instead, Ross states, “The spiritual discipline of meditation, according to the Psalter, begins with the memorization of divine instruction so that along the way by day, or on the bed at night, one could recall it and think about it.”¹⁶ The delight and joy of knowing and doing what Scripture teaches can be accomplished by consistently thinking about what the Bible teaches. The connection between meditation and obedience can be seen in the book of Joshua when God is talking to Joshua before the Israelites cross the Jordan. God tells Joshua, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Josh 1:8).

The Fruit Will Come

There are lasting benefits to delighting in the Lord and meditating on the Law day and night. Verse 3 compares a believer that meditates on the Law to a “tree planted by streams of water” (Ps 1:3a). The tree metaphor is also used in Jeremiah 17:7-8: “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by

¹⁵ VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 55.

¹⁶ Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 189.

water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.” A tree planted by streams of water invokes a picture of strong growth. This strong growth will produce fruit. When there may be adverse conditions, it will not die and “its leaf does not wither.” The stream metaphor in this passage can refer to a “natural flowing stream or an irrigation channel.”¹⁷ Either way, a tree by a constant supply of water will flourish. It puts down deep roots and will grow because it finds the nutrients it needs. The same is true of a believer that meditates constantly on the Law. His focus is on God’s Word and meditating on God’s Word helps him live a godly life that is pleasing to the Lord. Carl Keil and Franz Delitzsch state,

What a richly flowing brook is to the tree that is planted on its bank, such is the word of God to him who devotes himself to it: it makes him, according to his position and calling, ever fruitful in good and well-timed deeds and keeps him fresh in his inner and outward life, and whatsoever such an one undertakes, he brings to a successful issue, for the might of the word and of the blessing of God is in his actions.¹⁸

A believer daily living out what the Word of God says will be pleasing to the Lord. This passage does say that the tree will produce fruit “in its season.” This implies that the tree is not constantly producing fruit. Derek Kidner explains, “The phrase ‘its fruit in its season’ emphasizes both the distinctiveness and the quiet growth of the product; for the tree is no mere channel, piping the water unchanged from one place to another, but a living organism which absorbs it, to produce in due course something new and delightful, proper to its kind and to its time.”¹⁹ A believer that meditates on the law day and night will be changed by what he meditates on, which will yield fruit in its season. When tough times come, his faith will be strong and he will not wither away. This verse should be an

¹⁷ Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 11.

¹⁸ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 5 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 50.

¹⁹ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72, Kidner Classic Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 65.

encouragement to believers. Fruit will come, but patience is needed. Psalm 119:105 says, “Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” For a tree to be strong, produce fruit, and have leaves that do not wither, it must be near its source of life—water. The same is true with believers: a believer must be in the Word constantly to grow strong and be able to produce fruit and not lose sight of what matters when struggles come his way. Constable writes, “The fruit a Christian bears is mainly a transformed character and godly conduct.”²⁰

The Prosperous Promise

A believer that meditates on the law day and night will have a solid foundation, like a tree. He will produce fruit and be constantly nourished by God’s Word. The promise at the end of verse 3 is, “In all that he does, he prospers” (Ps 1:3b). While this is an encouragement to believers, it does not mean that life will be easy. Ross shares, “This is not a blanket statement promising unlimited success . . . if the righteous meditate in God’s word, they will live in obedience to it and doing that is what will succeed.”²¹ Constable continues, “His prosperity is from God’s viewpoint, not necessarily from the world’s.”²² Believers must trust *and* obey what the law teaches to prosper. The growth of biblical spirituality in a believer’s life occurs when his thoughts are grounded daily in the Word of God.

Psalm 1:1-3 points out the contrast of what a believer should and should not do. He is to meditate on God’s Law day and night. His thinking should constantly be affected by what is taught in God’s Word. Meditating on God’s Word will help a believer be productive and fruitful. The following section will examine 2 Timothy 3:16-17 to show that the Bible is sufficient for training and righteousness of a believer.

²⁰ Constable, *Job-Song of Solomon*, 64.

²¹ Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 191.

²² Constable, *Job-Song of Solomon*, 64.

Second Timothy 3:16-17: “Sufficiency of Scripture”

A biblical passage that clearly states Scripture is all one needs to follow and grow in Christ is 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” When equipping young men to understand and practice spiritual disciplines, it is important for them to see the eternal value in basing their daily decisions on what the Bible teaches. Andreas Köstenberger states, “Christian training must first be grounded in Scripture, (not merely general life experience or commonsense values).”²³ Living for Christ cannot be based on the latest fad or teaching that is popular to the masses. Training and equipping the next generation must come from Scripture and it is hard work. Köstenberger shares that training “must be thorough—there are no shortcuts to true spiritual growth—including both instruction and correction.”²⁴ Through the study of Scripture, a young man can know how to follow Jesus. John MacArthur declares, “It goes without saying that it is impossible to believe, understand, and follow what you do not even know.”²⁵

Breathed Out by God

Paul explains, “All Scripture is breathed out by God.” *Theos* means “God” and the verb *pneō* means “breath.”²⁶ *Theopneustos* literally means “breathed out by God” or “God-breathed.”²⁷ There is some debate as to the interpretation of the beginning of this verse. Some believe the Greek says, “God-breathed Scripture,” while others believe it

²³ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Commentary on 1-2 Timothy & Titus*, Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation (Nashville: B & H, 2017), 269.

²⁴ Köstenberger, *Commentary on 1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 269.

²⁵ John F. MacArthur Jr., *2 Timothy*, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 155.

²⁶ Ralph Earle, *2 Timothy*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 409.

²⁷ MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 142-43.

says “scripture is God-breathed.” George W. Knight III points out that whether the original text said “God-breathed Scripture” or “scripture is God-breathed,” there is basically no difference in the meaning.²⁸

All of the Holy Scriptures are breathed out by God. Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin write, “The Scriptures owe their origin and distinctiveness to God himself.”²⁹ While man was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit when writing the Scripture, the words came from God. The weight that all Scripture is breathed out by God puts the Bible on a higher plane than any other text. The Creator of the universe gave the words needed to help believers grow. Hans Conzelmann and Martin Dibelius state, “The emphasis of the passage doubtless lies, not on the concept of inspiration, but on the usefulness of the inspired Scriptures.”³⁰ The Scriptures are useful *because* they are God-breathed.

When Paul wrote this to Timothy the canon of Scripture was not complete. Philip Towner shares, “At the time the Old Testament represented the revelation of God, his communication to human beings, that had been written down; but it is certainly correct to extend his meaning to include the New Testament.”³¹ MacArthur continues, “Graphē (Scripture) . . . was commonly used in the early church not only of the Old Testament but also of God’s newly revealed Word.”³² In 2 Peter 3:15-16a, Peter reminds his readers of the words written by Paul: “And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters.” Peter understood that what Paul

²⁸ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 445.

²⁹ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 236.

³⁰ Hans Conzelmann and Martin Dibelius, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 120.

³¹ Philip Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 200.

³² MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 145.

had written was true and from God. First Timothy 3:16 can be read in the present and have the same meaning when Paul wrote it to Timothy.

Scripture Is Profitable

Paul continues verse 16 by pointing out four ways that Scripture is profitable to Timothy and thus all believers. William Mounce explains, “Although never stated, the assumption is that because Scripture comes from God, it is therefore true, and because it is true, it is therefore profitable.”³³ The first two prepositional phrases in this verse deal with doctrine while the second two focus on behavior.³⁴ First, Paul wants Timothy to be reminded that Scripture is profitable for teaching. The Greek word for teaching is *didaskalia*. In this verse “teaching” is pointing to biblical doctrine. Lea and Griffin state, “Because of the prominence of heresy among his readers, Paul emphasized the importance of sound teaching.”³⁵

Scripture is also valuable to help convict people of their sin and challenge them to repent (Heb 4:12). In this verse, the second prepositional phrase states that Scripture is profitable for reproof. Those that follow Jesus and are led by the Holy Spirit will be convicted by what the Bible says. This is not to make believers feel bad or unworthy, but to point out their error so they will confess their sin and move toward obedience. The purpose of reproof is to see positive change in the life of a Christian.

Paul continues by reminding Timothy that Scripture is profitable for correction. Paul had just concluded telling Timothy that Scripture should be used to point out false doctrine and sinful behavior. He now declares the Bible is also used to correct behavior. The term Paul uses is *epanorthōsin* and it means “restoration to an upright position or a

³³ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 566.

³⁴ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 570.

³⁵ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 236.

right state.”³⁶ When believers make mistakes in their doctrinal beliefs or personal behavior, Scripture is able to convict and help them change to follow Christ again.

Paul concludes the four prepositional phrases by stating that Scripture is profitable for training in righteousness. This phrase points out that righteousness takes training. The Greek word for “training” is *paideia*. *Paideia* “comes from *pais* (child). It originally meant the rearing of a child.”³⁷ Ephesians 6:4 uses the term *paideia* when it says, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but *bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*” Over time, the word “came to be used of any sort of training.”³⁸ Training to follow Christ is a life-long pursuit for a follower of Jesus. Mounce concludes, “Scripture is useful to train someone in righteousness since it provides not only the content of belief but also the guidelines for conduct.”³⁹

Complete and Equipped

In verse 17, Paul continues by saying why it is important for believers to be taught, reprovved, corrected, and trained in righteousness. Paul wants Timothy to use the Scriptures to teach, reprove, correct, and train in righteousness “that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” Paul’s desire is for every follower of Jesus to be complete and able to do the good works God has prepared for him to do (Eph 2:10). Köstenberger points out, “All believers are called to good works.”⁴⁰ Titus 2:7 says, “Show yourself in all respects to be in a model of good works.” Christians are saved by faith alone, not by works. However, Christians are called to live out their faith and the evidence should be in every good work that is done for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ. Mounce

³⁶ Earle, *2 Timothy*, 410.

³⁷ Earle, *2 Timothy*, 410.

³⁸ MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 161.

³⁹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 570.

⁴⁰ Köstenberger, *Commentary on 1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 269.

reminds all believers, “Timothy and all Christians can find in Scripture everything necessary to do good works.”⁴¹

The words found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 can be used to encourage young men to study the Bible and live out a godly life. Towner states, “The relevance of Scripture may be seen in its complete sufficiency for living the Christian life.”⁴² Lea and Griffin continue, “Scripture can show sinners their failures, clarify the point of the mistake, and lead them to a new sense of peace and wholeness.”⁴³ In the next section, 1 Timothy 4:7-12 will show that how to train in godliness to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord.

First Timothy 4:7-12: “Time to Train”

The hard work of developing spiritual disciplines is important in the faith journey of every young man. Not only do spiritual disciplines draw young men to Jesus, but they also help them be examples to those they interact with on a daily basis. In 1 Timothy 4:7-12, Paul encourages a young Timothy with specific ways not to get sidetracked from following Jesus and how to be an example for others. Young men can follow these words to Timothy to help them develop godliness and be an example for others.

Train for Godliness

In the beginning of this passage Paul warns Timothy to not get distracted by “irreverent, silly myths.” Griffin and Lea explain, “The command ‘Have nothing to do with’ suggests a strong rejection.”⁴⁴ This was not a suggestion, but a command by Paul. Paul wants Timothy to stay away from worthless myths that do not deserve his time. The word “myths” refers back to 1:4, which says, “nor to devote themselves to myths and

⁴¹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 571.

⁴² Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 201.

⁴³ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 237.

⁴⁴ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 134.

endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.” R. C. H. Lenski points out the difference between chapter 1 and 4 when he says, “In chapter 1 Timothy is directed to order those who promulgate these myths to cease this and to put their minds on the gospel; here Timothy is directed how to treat these myths themselves when people come to him with them. Not for one moment is he to treat them seriously, discuss them, argue against them.”⁴⁵ Lenski continues, “Timothy has far more valuable things to do than to argue with ignorant and shallow fanatics. His great concern is “godliness,” godliness in the sense of complete devotion to the true religion, certainly for the sake of his own person but also when serving in his great office.”⁴⁶ Paul did not want Timothy to participate in such trivial discussions. However, Paul did not just tell Timothy what not to do. Donald Guthrie points out, “The apostle is quick to balance a negative with a positive injunction. He turns to athletics for his illustration, probably to emphasize the contrast between manly exercise and old wives’ tales.”⁴⁷ Robert Yarborough states that the phrase “rather, train yourself” is “a forceful summons to an about-face.”⁴⁸ Paul wants Timothy to focus on godliness and does not want irreverent silly myths to stop Timothy from this desire. The pursuit of godliness cannot not be half-hearted. All of Timothy’s energy should be focused on godliness. Mounce emphasizes, “Timothy should actively, rigorously pursue the true goal, godliness.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), 630.

⁴⁶ Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles*, 631.

⁴⁷ Donald Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 109.

⁴⁸ Robert W. Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018), 239.

⁴⁹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 251.

Godliness Holds Eternal Value

Griffin and Lea explain that in verse 8 “Paul introduced an explanation of his command that Timothy should train in godliness.”⁵⁰ Paul contrasts bodily training with godliness. Some believe “bodily training” refers to physical exercise, but another view is that it is speaking to a Christian’s discipline of his body for Christ. A Christian must develop habits to keep his body under control. While keeping one’s body under control is important, Paul continues that godliness has value in every way “for the present life and also for the life to come.” Köstenberger points out, “Spiritual exercise, however, yields rewards and holds promises for both the present life and the life to come.”⁵¹ A believer should spend time focusing on developing habits that help discipline his earthly body, but his main focus should be godliness because it will affect his earthly and eternal life. An eternal perspective is needed to continually focus on training for godliness. When talking about godliness, Guthrie says, “Its range is immeasurably greater for it embraces not only this life but the life to come.”⁵²

Trustworthy and Deserving

Commentators disagree on what Paul meant when he wrote, “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.” Some believe he is referring to what he wrote in verse 8 while others believe he is saying this statement to introduce verse 10. Guthrie points out this disagreement when he says, “There is some doubt whether the trustworthy saying formula of verse 9 relates to the statement of verse 8 about godliness, or to the following statement giving the reason for our present toil.”⁵³ Yarborough presents the case that verse 9 could be referring to what is before and after it:

⁵⁰ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 134.

⁵¹ Köstenberger, *Commentary on 1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 146.

⁵² Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 109.

⁵³ Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 109.

Paul may have in mind the intertwined central substance of vv. 6-10: the truth of the faith (v. 6); the inestimable value of God's promise and resulting possibility of relative human godliness with certainty of eternal life (v. 8); the living God in his saving regard for sinners "who believe" (v. 10) among whom are (most undeservedly) Paul and Timothy.⁵⁴

The main point is that what Paul is saying is true and should be taken seriously.

Hope in God

Paul continues to be forward focused in verse 10. The work being done is difficult, but worth it. Towner states, "The Greek terms for 'toil and strive' together mean 'making every possible effort,' which suggests a very important goal."⁵⁵ Guthrie writes, "The race of godliness demands every ounce of energy a person possesses."⁵⁶ Mounce continues, "Paul does not mind toiling for the gospel because he knows that God is alive."⁵⁷ The life-long pursuit of godliness is worth it because the discipline and service is done for God who is alive. Paul ends verse 10 saying that God "is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe." This can seem contradictory at first, but Lea and Griffin point out, "Paul called God 'the Savior of all men' in that he genuinely wants all human beings to experience salvation."⁵⁸ They continue, "The term 'especially' introduces the explanation that assurance of salvation belongs to those who have received Christ. His purpose in stressing this assurance for believers was to remind them that their hope in God would not be in vain."⁵⁹ Paul was an evangelist that wished to see everyone come to know Christ. He saw God as the savior of all men, and only those who believed in the gospel were saved. Some may read this verse and believe "who is the Savior of all people"

⁵⁴ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 241.

⁵⁵ Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 108.

⁵⁶ Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 110.

⁵⁷ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 256.

⁵⁸ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 136.

⁵⁹ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 136.

points to a universalism viewpoint. A study of Scripture points to the error of this view. John 3:18 says, “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” Man must believe in the saving grace of Jesus, or he will be condemned. John continues in verse 36, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” There are two paths for humankind. A personal relationship with Jesus leads to eternal life. Those that do not have this personal relationship will spend eternity separated from God in hell.⁶⁰

Time to Be Bold

In verses 11 and 12, Paul gives Timothy a charge to be bold and teach what he has shared with him throughout this letter. Some believe Timothy may have been timid or shy because of Paul’s strong encouragement. Whatever Timothy’s personality, Paul wanted him to be bold with the gospel. Paul starts verse 11 with the word “command.”

Köstenberger emphasizes, “From his position of delegated apostolic authority, Timothy must not only teach but even command acceptance of Paul’s teaching.”⁶¹ Lenski drives home the point about Timothy’s teaching: “Timothy is to order, announce, pound them in in an authoritative manner as Paul’s representative.”⁶²

Time to Lead

Paul finishes this section of verses by encouraging Timothy to lead by example. Lenski writes, “The term ‘example’ signifies a pattern or a model.”⁶³ Paul wants Timothy to live in a way that other believers could emulate. While Christians do not know how old

⁶⁰ The final judgement in Matt 25:31-46 gives a clear picture that those that do not believe in Jesus while on earth will be separated from God for eternity.

⁶¹ Köstenberger, *Commentary on 1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 150.

⁶² Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles*, 640.

⁶³ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 137.

Timothy was at the time of receiving this letter, Lenski suggests that “we can only estimate he was probably between 35 and 40 years of age.”⁶⁴ This was probably a young age for someone in such a high leadership role in the church. Lenski points out, “The ‘elders’ of the congregations were commonly older men, often men of years.”⁶⁵ Timothy’s young age may not endear respect from the older elders in case of a disagreement. Paul knew this was the case and encouraged Timothy to live in such a way that those who did not respect him because of his age would listen to what he had to say because of how he lived his life. To do this well, Köstenberger states, “Timothy’s life must not be divorced from his teaching.”⁶⁶

Paul offers five areas that Timothy should set as an example for all believers. Guthrie writes, “The qualities in which Timothy is to excel are those in which youth is so often deficient. Yet for that reason they would stand out the more strikingly.”⁶⁷ The five areas Timothy is to be an example in are speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. Mounce explains, “The first two have an impact on his public ministry; the final three deal more with his personal life although what is true inwardly always shows itself outwardly.”⁶⁸ First, Timothy is to lead by example through his speech. Yarborough states, “Speech is a barometer of the heart.”⁶⁹ If Timothy did not speak in an appropriate manner, then those under his preaching would not give credence to what was being taught. Second, Timothy is to lead by example in his conduct. Timothy is to carry himself in such a way that others admire and respect how he acts in all situations. Third, Timothy is to lead by example in love. Timothy is to love those with whom he interacts. For instance, some look down on

⁶⁴ Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles*, 640.

⁶⁵ Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles*, 641.

⁶⁶ Köstenberger, *Commentary on 1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 151.

⁶⁷ Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 111.

⁶⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 259.

⁶⁹ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 248.

him because of his age, yet he is still to love them. Fourth, Timothy is to lead by example in his faith. His faith in the living God must be evident in how he talks, acts, and loves. Finally, Timothy is to lead by example in purity. Mounce writes, “The word purity has sexual connotations, giving the meaning ‘chaste.’”⁷⁰ Timothy is to live a pure lifestyle; he must make decisions that leave no room for false accusations.

In this passage, Paul encourages Timothy to focus on godliness and to lead by example. Raymond Collins states, “Paul expected that his (Timothy) example would motivate people and that a chain of Christian evangelization and witness would be established.”⁷¹ Young men can follow the same advice and not get distracted by worldly things that can steer them from the truth. Godliness has eternal value and deserves serious attention. Just as Paul encourages Timothy to live a life worthy of being followed, young men should also focus on setting a Christian example for those around them. Towner emphasizes, “Through what a Christian says and does the truth of the Christian faith will be either demonstrated or denied, for true spirituality (godliness) is the composite of faith or knowledge of God and its outworking in the believer’s life.”⁷² Young men can set an example for others by developing spiritual disciplines that help them grow in godliness. Older men should also lead by example. The next section will look at Paul’s instructions to Titus for how older men are to live by example and young men are to be self-controlled.

Titus 2:1-6: “Instructions for Men”

In Titus 2:1-6, Paul encourages Titus to specifically address four different age groups: older men, older women, younger women, and younger men. This project will focus on verses 1-2 and 6, which address older and younger men. Verses 3-5 give instructions outside the scope of this project.

⁷⁰ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 260.

⁷¹ Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 128.

⁷² Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 109.

In this letter, Paul reminds Titus that he left him on Crete “that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed” (Titus 1:5). Paul was concerned that the Christians throughout Crete did not yet have strong leadership. Towner points out that some in Crete were leading others astray, suggesting that “Paul writes these verses because the opponents had rejected the message and perverted the concept of a Christian way of life.”⁷³ Strong biblical leadership was needed to teach the true message of the gospel.

Teach Sound Doctrine

Paul starts off this section of Scripture with the word “but.” Köstenberger highlights, “‘But’ establishes a contrast between the false teachers (mentioned in 1:10-16) and Titus.”⁷⁴ Paul now tells Titus what he needs to do. Paul wants Titus to “teach.” Titus is a spiritual leader on Crete and Paul wants him to teach the believers how to grow as Christians. Yarborough explains that the word “teach” “is an imperative (from *laleō*) and is generally defined as “speak, say, talk.”⁷⁵ Titus is to teach, or speak, “sound doctrine.” Towner states, “Sound doctrine, the approved teaching of the Christian faith which produces spiritual health, is the immovable foundation of the Christian life.”⁷⁶ Paul is concerned with the foundational faith of the believing Cretans and wants Titus to focus on strong biblical teaching.

Older Men Lead by Example

The first group of believers that Paul encourages Titus to focus on is older men. The Greek word *presbytas* is used in this passage for “older men.”⁷⁷ Interestingly,

⁷³ Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 235.

⁷⁴ Köstenberger, *Commentary on 1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 328.

⁷⁵ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 507.

⁷⁶ Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 235.

⁷⁷ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 297.

presbytas is used only two other times in the New Testament. Paul used it to describe himself in Philemon 1:9 and when describing Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist.⁷⁸ While commentators are not sure about the exact age of “older men,” Lea and Griffin underscore that “generally speaking, this group may have referred to men of an age sufficient to have raised a family and seen their children begin families of their own.”⁷⁹ Paul continues by telling Titus four qualities that older men should possess.⁸⁰

First, older men are to be sober-minded. The Greek word for sober-minded is *nephalious*.⁸¹ Knight defines “sober-minded” as being clear-headed.⁸² Older men need to know and understand the Scriptures so that they can think clearly when making decisions on how to live.

Second, older men are to be dignified. The Greek word for dignified is *semnos*, and means serious, honorable, or worthy of respect. Older men are not to be silly or immature. They are to be mature and someone that can be admired because of their Christian walk. Yarborough says it well: “A godly dignity should mark their character and shine forth from their lives.”⁸³

The third quality Paul tells Titus older Christian men should possess is “self-control.” Yarborough shares that self-control is the opposite of “fickleness, rash passion, and impulsiveness.”⁸⁴ These adjectives could easily be used to describe many men in

⁷⁸ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Titus, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 73.

⁷⁹ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 297.

⁸⁰ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 409.

⁸¹ Thomas Constable, *Philippians-Philemon*, Thomas Constable’s Notes on the Bible, vol. 10 (Hurst, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2017), 380.

⁸² Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 305-11.

⁸³ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 509.

⁸⁴ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 510.

their youth. As a mature follower of Jesus, the life-long sanctification process should help men learn to control their thoughts, words, and actions.

Paul finishes his list of qualities for older men by giving three things they are to be “sound in.” Mounce clarifies, “The fourth quality enjoined upon elderly (older) men is that they be healthy in the triad of faith, love, and steadfastness.”⁸⁵ Yarborough continues, “The word ‘in’ before each of these (words) gives the effect of Paul pausing over them one by one, as if relishing the prospect of old and respected believers given over to these great, gospel-enabled practices.”⁸⁶ First, older men are to be “sound in faith.” MacArthur expounds,

Sound in faith means having learned that God indeed can be trusted in every way. They do not question His wisdom or power or love, and they do not lose trust in His goodness and grace or lose confidence in His divine plan and divine wisdom. They do not doubt the truth or sufficiency of His Word or waver in their divinely assured hope that His sovereign plan will be fulfilled.⁸⁷

Life experiences help solidify one’s faith if one turns to Christ when the ups and downs of life come one’s way. Second, older men are to be “sound in love.” The Greek word here for love is *agape*. *Agape* love is whole-hearted and others-focused. Older men are to be outward-focused because they know love is about caring and serving others. Finally, older men are to be “sound in steadfastness.” Life is hard, but older men that love Jesus are to persevere while living with eternity in view. Constable explains that older men are to “patiently endure in view of their hope as believers.”⁸⁸ Godly older men have major impact in the local church. This may be one reason Paul addresses this age group first with Titus.

Paul continues this passage by looking at older and younger women. For this project, I will move on to verse 6. After sharing how older and younger women should

⁸⁵ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 409.

⁸⁶ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 510.

⁸⁷ MacArthur, *Titus*, 75.

⁸⁸ Constable, *Philippians-Philemon*, 380.

act, Paul bookends this section of Scripture by turning his focus to young men in the faith.

Self-Control Matters

In verse 6, Paul instructs Titus with regard to younger men. Paul begins by saying, “likewise,” which shows that Paul is now moving on to another age group, the younger men. He continues by using the word “urge.” Another word that could be used here is “encourage.”⁸⁹ Titus is to urge or encourage the younger men. Köstenberger underscores this point: “Titus is to call young men who might tend to lack restraint to a level-headed, disciplined life.”⁹⁰ Younger men can be impulsive and selfish. Yarborough emphasizes, “Titus’s challenge is to direct young men’s intensity and energy in redemptive directions, tethering them to God’s will and direction in their lives through the sound doctrine they receive.”⁹¹ Paul wants Titus to help young men live a self-controlled life. John Stott states, “Self-mastery is possible, even in young men, since there would be no point in exhorting them to an impossibility.”⁹² When younger men learn to practice self-control, they will avoid many of the consequences that come from sinful decisions made in one’s youth.

Paul’s first concern in these verses is for the older men. These godly men were not to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness just for their own sanctification. They were also to lead by example for the younger men. By living their life for God’s glory, they in turn show how an older godly man should live. The younger men in Crete could observe this behavior and be taught to develop the same Godly characteristics. Paul did not leave the younger men to just observe

⁸⁹ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 520.

⁹⁰ Köstenberger, *Commentary on 1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 334.

⁹¹ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 520.

⁹² John Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 128.

and follow the godly older men. He told Titus to urge the younger men to be self-controlled. When older, godly men focus on finishing strong in the faith and younger men follow their example by practicing self-control, the cycle of developing godly men can continue from generation to generation.

Conclusion

This chapter looked at four Scripture passages to show the importance of developing and practicing spiritual disciplines. Psalm 1 shared how a believer's delight is found in the law of the Lord. The benefit of meditating on God's law will help a believer grow in his faith to help him follow the Lord through the ups and downs of life. In 2 Timothy 3, Paul said that all Scripture is beneficial for Christian living. Scripture can help a believer grow in the good and bad times of life. Paul shared challenging words in 1 Timothy by telling Timothy to grow in godliness. Timothy should not be persuaded by older believers looking down on him because of his youth. Whatever one's age, a believer can grow in godliness and be an example to others. Finally, in the book of Titus, Paul desired older men to lead by example for the younger generation of men. He also urged younger men to live a self-controlled life.

Spiritual disciplines are vital to the growth of a believer. A believer must study Scripture so it can seep into the very fiber of his being. Scripture is applicable to every area of life, and one must know the Scripture to be able to apply it. As one grows during the sanctification process, he can use God-given opportunities to be an example for the younger generation to follow Jesus.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED
TO YOUNG MEN DEVELOPING
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

The previous chapter showed how the Bible teaches that spiritual growth comes from time in the Word. Young men must spend time in God’s Word and develop spiritual disciplines to grow into mature believers. This chapter will begin by looking at what biblical discipleship is and how it helps lead young men toward developing spiritual disciplines. Second, it will consider how the role of spiritual disciplines in the spiritual growth of young men is essential. Third, it will address how boys learn differently from girls and how this needs to be considered when teaching spiritual disciplines to eighth grade boys.

Defining Biblical Discipleship

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines *disciple* as “one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another.”¹ Young men that love the Lord should be known by their actions as a disciple of Jesus. For the purpose of this chapter, I will look at biblical discipleship and how it relates to eighth grade boys. People are always learning and what they learn affects what they believe and how they live. In *Discipleship That Fits*, Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom ask, “When it comes to growing spiritually, from whom are you learning?”² To help young men grow in their relationship with Jesus they must first learn from God’s Word. A young man must develop a love for Jesus to begin

¹ Merriam-Webster, “Disciple,” *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disciple>.

² Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits: The Five Kinds of Relationships God Uses to Help Us Grow* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 21.

his discipleship journey. Jesus points this out in Mark 12:30: “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” In his book *Discipleship*, J. Heinrich Arnold continues this thought: “Discipleship means complete dedication. It demands everything—the whole heart, the whole mind, and the whole of life, including one’s time, energy, and property—for the cause of love.”³

Biblical discipleship involves two main components: knowing and obeying the Bible. Scripture guides disciples to become more like Jesus. M. Robert Mulholland Jr., states, “The Scripture stands close to the center of this whole process of being conformed to the image of Christ.”⁴ Young men must know the Bible so they can begin conforming to what it teaches. Romans 12:2a encourages followers of Jesus: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” This verse gives evidence that every person will be conformed to something. Outside influences always affect people. Paul warns the believers in Rome to not let the world shape who they are and what they believe. Young men must not only know what the Bible teaches, but they must obey it. Renewal of the mind, through Scripture, leads to biblical transformation. The Bible is to be the main component of what continually transforms a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Harrington and Absalom point out, “In the New Testament, the word for ‘disciple’ (*mathetes*) occurs 264 times. In its original ancient Greek context, it meant someone who was either an apprentice in a trade or a pupil of a teacher.”⁵ Apprentices, or pupils, do not just observe what they are being taught. They learn from their teacher and then apply what they have learned. This is what a disciple of Jesus Christ is supposed to do as well. He is to learn what the Bible says and then do it. A disciple of Jesus must

³ J. Heinrich Arnold, *Discipleship* (Farmington, PA: Plough, 1994), 19.

⁴ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: Upper Room, 2000), 28.

⁵ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 20.

constantly focus on what pleases the Lord and not self. Spiritual formation is hard work and takes time. Mulholland claims, “This gradual aspect of spiritual formation moves against the grain of our instant gratification culture.”⁶ Following Jesus is not popular or easy. In *Deep Discipleship*, J. T. English states, “Discipleship, then, is about a redirection of our lives to the One who is lovely.”⁷ Knowing and obeying the Scriptures helps young men redirect their lives to what pleases the Lord and helps form a young man’s spiritual disciplines.

Knowing the Bible

Biblical discipleship begins with learning what is taught in Scripture. If a young man wants to please God with his life, then he must know what the Bible teaches. For instance, Proverbs 15:14a says, “The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge.” A young man must first seek knowledge and guard his way by doing what the Word teaches. To do what the Word teaches, he must first know what it says. In Psalm 119:11 David says, “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.” The first thing David says he does in this verse is store God’s Word in his heart. He had to know it to store it.

The first step to not sinning is knowing the Word. But knowledge of the Word is not enough. Knowledge of what is taught in the Bible must lead to heart transformation. Jesus addresses this issue in Matthew 23:27: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness.” They used their knowledge of the Scriptures to elevate themselves above others. They knew the Law very well, but their knowledge did not lead to heart transformation. Jesus knew their heart had not been

⁶ Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word*, 25.

⁷ J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B & H, 2020), 20.

affected by their knowledge. Knowledge is a needed ingredient in biblical discipleship, but it must be partnered with obedience.

Obeying the Bible

A person who knows what the Bible teaches is not necessarily a disciple of Jesus. Someone can know a great deal about Scripture, but if they have not made the decision to follow Jesus their knowledge is in vain. A disciple of Jesus not only knows the Scriptures but makes a conscious decision to try and obey them. Arnold encourages believers: “Dedicate yourself daily to the person of Jesus. Then it will be possible to burn for him and to give up all self-concern.”⁸ Obedience takes minute-by-minute dedication to make God-honoring decisions.

In the New Testament Jesus taught his followers to obey his teachings. In Mark 8:34-36 Jesus says, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?” The first thing Jesus says a disciple must do is deny himself. To do that, he must know what the Bible says he is supposed to do so he can deny it. Once he has the knowledge of what to do, he must “take up his cross and follow.” In his book *Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, Eugene Peterson notes, “For obedience is not a stodgy plodding in the ruts of religion, it is a hopeful race toward God’s promises.”⁹ Young men who love God must strive to obey Him in every situation. Arnold shares, “We must concentrate our hearts, minds, and souls on the vision of his kingdom and on him, the coming One.”¹⁰ Disciples can more easily make decisions that are pleasing to the Lord when their focus is on Jesus and his kingdom.

⁸ Arnold, *Discipleship*, 245.

⁹ Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 162.

¹⁰ Arnold, *Discipleship*, 238.

Effects on the Development of Spiritual Disciplines

Knowing and obeying Scripture can naturally help a young man begin practicing spiritual disciplines. If he loves God and wants to obey Him, he will spend time reading and studying the Bible. The spiritual discipline of continual Bible reading and study will help equip him with guidance on how to live a godly life. A young man that loves God will also want to spend time in prayer communicating with Him. The spiritual discipline of prayer is vital to the growth of a disciple. Prayer takes one's focus off himself and places it on the things that matter to God. A heart of worship will flow from a disciple that loves the Lord. Young men need to learn that worship is more than just singing on Sunday morning. There are many ways to worship the Lord and young men can worship him every day in different ways as discussed later in this chapter.

A young man may also develop the spiritual discipline of Bible memorization so he can be equipped to constantly think about God's Word. Memorizing God's Word encourages a young man to think about godly things and help him battle temptation. The spiritual discipline of evangelism must also be learned. A young man that understands what God has done for him should be able to share his faith with others. Finally, a young man that strives to know and obey what the Scripture teaches should develop the spiritual discipline of serving.¹¹ Jesus vividly taught about serving in John 13 when he washed the disciples' feet. After washing the disciples' feet, Jesus said, "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (vv. 13-15). The King of King and Lord of Lords led by example and served his disciples by washing their dirty feet. In Matthew 20:28 Jesus says, "Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus' death on the cross was the ultimate example of

¹¹ There are many other spiritual disciplines. I am only referring to the six disciplines taught in this project.

servanthood. He gave his life for the elect. A young man should follow Jesus's example and look for ways to serve others to point them to Christ.

Spiritual disciplines are born out of biblical discipleship. A young man must begin to learn the Scriptures to develop a propensity to obey the Scriptures. John had an eternal focus when he said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Spiritual disciplines help young men put their focus on Christ and not themselves. The next section of this chapter looks at the role of spiritual disciplines in the growth of a young man.

Role of Spiritual Disciplines in the Spiritual Growth of Young Men

Young men with the desire to become more like Jesus Christ must take seriously the practice of spiritual disciplines. Dallas Willard points out, "A discipline for the spiritual life is, when the dust of history is blown away, nothing but an activity undertaken to bring us into more effective cooperation with Christ and his kingdom."¹² The disciplines discussed in this chapter will help young men focus on Christ and His kingdom. It takes hard work to develop and continually practice spiritual disciplines, but as Donald Whitney states, "Godliness comes through discipline."¹³ Richard Foster explains, "Spiritual disciplines aim at replacing old destructive habits of thought with new life-giving habits."¹⁴ Young men need to be encouraged that "spiritual transformation is not a matter of trying harder, but of training wisely."¹⁵ The following pages will look at how young men can

¹² Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: HarperOne, 1999), 156.

¹³ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 10.

¹⁴ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: HarperOne, 2018), 62.

¹⁵ John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 43.

“train wisely” to understand and practice the spiritual disciplines of Bible reading and study, prayer, evangelism, worship, Bible memorization, and serving.¹⁶

Bible Reading and Study

The most important spiritual discipline a young man must develop to become more like Christ is reading and studying the Bible. Whitney shares, “If you want to be changed, if you want to become more like Jesus Christ, discipline yourself to read the Bible.”¹⁷ Reading and studying the Bible are important to the growth of a young man because “all Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Tim 3:16a). Spending time in God’s Word, with an open heart willing to be changed by the Holy Spirit, is the best way for a young man to grow more like Christ. Paul encourages his readers, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil 4:8). Knowledge of the Scriptures is needed for a young man to think and act upon the things that please the Lord.

Reading is the first step to learning what is taught in the Bible. Whitney shares, “In the Bible we learn the ways and will of the Lord. We find in Scripture how God wants us to live, and what brings the most joy and satisfaction in life.”¹⁸ Reading Scripture helps a believer put his focus on what pleases God and takes the focus off himself. Besides reading the Bible, a disciple of Jesus must also take the next step and study what is being taught so he can apply it to his life. Whitney writes, “A deep insatiable hunger for the Bible is a gift from God, but we are the ones who must turn the pages and read the

¹⁶ I asked nine godly men involved in the local church or Christian education to rank eleven spiritual disciplines in order of importance. While all spiritual disciplines are vital to the spiritual growth of young men, this project allows time to teach six. These six received the overall highest rankings.

¹⁷ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 28.

¹⁸ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 22.

words.”¹⁹ Believers must take deliberate action to study the Word of God. Richard Foster points out that believers should study the Bible because “study produces joy.” Foster continues, “Like any novice, we will find it hard work in the beginning. But the greater our proficiency, the greater our joy.”²⁰ Young men need to think long term and understand the joy that will come from studying the Scriptures. Willard reminds young men, “Our prayer as we study meditatively is always that God would meet with us and speak specifically to us, for ultimately the Word of God is God speaking.”²¹ Young men must learn reverence for God’s Word and develop an expectation that God can and will communicate with them through Bible reading and study.

Prayer

If a young man wants to grow closer to Christ, he needs to partner Bible reading and study with the spiritual discipline of prayer. Whitney asserts, “Prayer is second only to the intake of God’s Word in importance.”²² There are different kinds of prayers, but for my project I will be using Willard’s overarching definition: “Prayer is conversing, communicating with God.”²³ Young men may wonder why prayer is so important. First and foremost, they should follow Jesus’s example. The Gospels record times when Jesus got up early before dawn and prayed (Luke 5:16). Paul Miller points out, “His (Jesus) prayer life is an expression of his relationship with his Father.”²⁴ Miller continues, “Jesus’ example teaches us that prayer is about relationship.”²⁵ His disciples also prayed. Luke

¹⁹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 12.

²⁰ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 76.

²¹ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 177.

²² Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 80.

²³ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 184.

²⁴ Paul Miller, *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2017), 33.

²⁵ Miller, *A Praying Life*, 35.

11:1 says, “Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.’” The disciples believed prayer was important enough that they asked Jesus to teach them how to better pray. The apostle Paul also encouraged prayer in a few of his letters. First Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Pray without ceasing.” Whitney explains, “So praying without ceasing means you never really stop conversing with God; you simply have frequent interruptions.”²⁶ He clarifies that Christians should continually pray to God throughout the day. Prayers do not have to be long and at specific times. They can be at any time, night or day, short or long, with a desire to talk with God. Paul reiterates his focus on prayer in Colossians: “Continue steadfastly in prayer” (4:2). A continuous prayer life should be one mark of a young man’s walk with the Lord.

Young men must learn that having an open line of communication with the Lord is a blessing that should not be ignored. In *Prayer: How Praying Together Shapes the Church*, John Onwuchekwa encourages believers to “think of prayer as God’s prescription for life in a fallen world.”²⁷ Young men need to learn and understand there are many benefits to a robust prayer life. First, a prayer-filled life helps a believer focus on the things of God. Philip Yancey shares his experience: “Without prayer, my attention moves to my own preoccupation.”²⁸ Prayer takes the focus off the pray-er and onto the One who listens and cares for all of creation. He continues, “Ultimately prayer proves its power by producing changes in us, the pray-ers.”²⁹ It turns the heart of the one praying toward the desires of the omniscient Father. Foster shares, “In prayer, real prayer, we begin to think God’s thoughts after him; to desire the things He desires, to love the things He loves, to

²⁶ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 82.

²⁷ John Onwuchekwa, *Prayer: How Praying Together Shapes the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 35.

²⁸ Philip Yancey, *Prayer: Does It Make any Difference?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 290.

²⁹ Yancy, *Prayer*, 290.

will the things He wills. Progressively we are taught to see things from His point of view.”³⁰ Second, a strong prayer life helps one grow in spiritual maturity. A young man who prays focuses more on God and his desires than on his personal preferences. Whitney states, “Prayerful people become godly people, for prayerfulness with God cultivates godliness in all of life.”³¹

The spiritual discipline of prayer applied to the life of a young man will help him grow to become more like Christ. He needs to learn that prayer is a conversation with God. God is not a vending machine in the sky to give us what our sinful heart desires. He is an omniscient Creator that cares for His creation and wants us to share our excitement, hurts, and struggles with Him. Yancey stresses this point after studying prayer in the Scriptures:

After reviewing the prayers contained in the Bible, I have stopped worrying about inappropriate prayers. If God counts on prayer as a primary way to relate to me, I may block potential intimacy by devising a test for appropriateness and filtering out prayers that may not meet the criteria. According to Jesus, nothing is too trivial. Everything about me—my thoughts, my motives, my choices, my moods—attracts God’s interest.³²

Young men should not focus as much on an “appropriate” way to pray as much as honestly having conversations with God and seeking His will and wisdom. Miller concludes, “If you know that you, like Jesus, can’t do life on your own, then prayer makes complete sense.”³³ The spiritual discipline of prayer will help young men become more like Christ.

Evangelism

A young man should understand and practice the spiritual discipline of evangelism. Whitney states, “Evangelism is relating the essential elements of God’s

³⁰ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 33.

³¹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 99.

³² Yancey, *Prayer*, 318.

³³ Miller, *A Praying Life*, 33.

salvation through Jesus Christ.”³⁴ The risen Jesus told his disciples before ascending to heaven, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:19-20). It is important for young men to understand that Jesus’s last words to his disciples were to go and make disciples.

The act of evangelism takes discipline. Whitney proclaims, “Evangelism is a discipline in that we must discipline ourselves to get into situations when evangelism can occur, that is, we must not just wait for witnessing opportunities to happen.”³⁵ The discipline of evangelism involves actively seeking out opportunities to share the gospel with others. Young men also need to understand that evangelism is more than sharing what God has done in their life. Mark Dever points out, “The message is about Him.”³⁶ The message of evangelism is a focus on what Christ has done on the cross while showing how it has changed one’s life. When sharing the gospel, a young man should ask the person if they would like to put their saving faith in Jesus. J. I. Packer, in his book *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, writes, “Our job is to point them to the living Christ, and summon them to trust in Him.”³⁷ It is important that after a young man shares how Christ has changed his life, he asks if the person would also like to put his faith and trust in Jesus.

The spiritual discipline of evangelism also helps a young man take his focus off himself and on the spiritual needs of others. Dever points out, “The call to evangelism is a call to turn our lives outward from focusing on ourselves and our needs to focusing

³⁴ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 120.

³⁵ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 127.

³⁶ Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 95.

³⁷ J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 70.

on God and on others made in his image who are still at enmity with him, alienated from him, and in need of salvation from sin and guilt.”³⁸ Patience and trust in God’s sovereignty are also needed when practicing evangelism. Packer states, “It is a work in which quick results are not promised; it is a work, therefore, in which the non-appearance of quick results is no sign of failure; but it is a work in which we cannot hope for success unless we are prepared to persevere with people.”³⁹ This can be a challenge for a young man who is used to instant gratification.

Matthew 5:14-16 says, “You are the light of the world.” Christians must be a light in their sphere of influence. The gospel is the greatest news and there are many souls that do not know or have not heard about the saving grace found only in Jesus Christ. A young man must discipline himself to find situations to share the gospel of Jesus. His life should be motivated by what Christ did on the cross. The spiritual discipline of evangelism is vital to helping a young man grow in his relationship with Jesus.

Worship

The next spiritual discipline that is important for young men to understand and practice is worship. Whitney defines worship as “focusing on and responding to God.”⁴⁰ Young men need to focus on God and then respond to how God has called them to live. Psalm 95:6 calls believers to worship: “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!” Foster explains, “If the Lord is to be *Lord*, worship must have priority in our lives.”⁴¹ Worship helps keep the Lord the central focus of a believer’s thoughts throughout the day. There are many different things competing for the

³⁸ Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, 101.

³⁹ Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 117.

⁴⁰ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 104.

⁴¹ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 160.

attention of young men. The lure of materialism, friendship, popularity, and comfort all vie for attention. The spiritual discipline of worship reorients focus back on God and what He has done for them.

There are many different forms of worship. Whitney states that “Bible reading, preaching, meditation, singing, praying, giving, baptism and communion”⁴² are all forms of worship. Many of these forms of worship are also considered spiritual disciplines. Young men need to understand that worship does not take place just on Sunday or in youth group. They need to be challenged to serve God with their whole being every day of the week. Mathew 12:30 says, “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” A young man who follows Jesus must love God with his whole being. Practicing spiritual disciplines can be an act of worship because of a love for the Lord. For instance, Whitney points out how the practice of Bible reading helps develop a lifestyle of worship: “The Bible reveals God to us so that we may focus on Him, and to the extent we focus on Him we will worship Him.”⁴³

Worship is a spiritual discipline that young men need to understand and develop. Whitney states, “To worship God means to ascribe the proper worth to God, to magnify His worthiness of praise, or better, to approach and address God as He is worthy.”⁴⁴ Young men need to be challenged to think about what they cherish. What do they cherish more than God? They may say they love God more than anything, but their decisions may prove otherwise. They need to be challenged to think about how they spend their time and resources. A heart of worship will lead to change in one’s life. Foster believes, “To worship is to change.”⁴⁵ Young men that develop the spiritual discipline of worship will change.

⁴² Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 105.

⁴³ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 105.

⁴⁴ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 104.

⁴⁵ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 173.

This change occurs because they are continually focused on God, which will draw their heart to be more like His heart. A. W. Tozer succinctly states, “If God is who He says He is, and if we are the believing people of God we claim to be, we must worship Him.”⁴⁶ Believers, including young men, must continually be reminded that God is God and we are not. The world revolves around Him, not us. Worship draws us into a deeper relationship with the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Bible Memorization

Bible memorization is a discipline that every young man who loves Jesus should understand and practice. This spiritual discipline is vital to spiritual growth. In *An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture*, Andy Davis points out that Jesus says, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Matt. 4:4). It is wise to follow David’s example when he said, “I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Ps 119:11). King David did not want to sin against the Lord and understood that knowing God’s Word was vital to honoring Him. Bible reading and study introduce a believer to the teachings of God, but Bible memorization allows the believer to take what he has read with him throughout the day. When trials and tribulations come, memorized Scripture about God’s care and sovereignty can encourage a believer. When temptation occurs, memorized Scripture about fighting temptation can help keep a believer from falling into sin. Whitney points out, “When Scripture is stored in your mind, it is available for the Holy Spirit to bring to your attention when you need it most.”⁴⁷

Andy Davis presents the case to memorize books of the Bible instead of select individual verses: “Memorizing books leads to a constant discovery of new insights,

⁴⁶ A. W. Tozer, *Worship: The Reason We Were Created* (Chicago: Moody, 2017), 110.

⁴⁷ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 39.

which keeps love for the Word vibrant and thrilling.”⁴⁸ While this task may seem daunting, Davis encourages believers to start with a small book (roughly 90-160 verses) to “get the discipline deeply rooted in your daily habits and you must develop your memory skills before you can attempt a really long book.”⁴⁹ Whether a young man is memorizing a full book of the Bible or a few verses, Davis encourages these steps to Bible memorization: Memorize one verse a day by saying it 10 times. Each consecutive day say the previous verse 10 times each, then all the verses you have memorized once together, then the new verse 10 times.⁵⁰ Repetition and perseverance are key to hiding God’s Word in one’s heart.

A heart saturated with Scripture is attuned to the will of the Holy Spirit. When a believer follows the will of the Holy Spirit, he grows in godliness. Colossians 3:23 encourages believers: “Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” Memorized Bible passages help a believer focus on the things of God and not earthly distractions. Whitney believes, “A pertinent scriptural truth, brought to your awareness by the Holy Spirit at just the right moment, can be the weapon that makes the difference in a spiritual battle.”⁵¹ Young teenage men are often focused on themselves. More thought is given to what to wear, what video game to play, what is cool, getting good grades, and playing sports than spiritual things. If young men who follow Jesus are taught to slow down and memorize God’s Word, then their focus may begin to shift from self to God. This shift in thinking can help young men grow in godliness.

⁴⁸ Andy Davis, *An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador International, 2014), 12.

⁴⁹ Davis, *An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture*, 14.

⁵⁰ Davis, *An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture*, 17-18.

⁵¹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 39.

Service

The spiritual discipline of service flows from the spiritual discipline of worship. A heart focused on worshipping the Lord will naturally look for ways to serve Him. Foster states, “Service flows out of worship.”⁵² Whitney continues, “Worship empowers serving; serving expresses worship. Godliness requires a disciplined balance between the two.”⁵³ Worship and serving are two disciplines that are closely intertwined.

Jesus gave a great example of servanthood by his actions recorded in John 13:12-16:

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.”

Jesus showed a servant’s heart by washing the disciples’ dirty feet. He set the example for how they were to care and serve others. Young men are called to do the same. Whitney points out, “The ministry of serving may be as public as preaching or teaching, but more often it will be as sequestered as nursery duty.”⁵⁴ The heart of Whitney’s point is that serving is quite often not a glamorous activity. It could be washing toilets, working a sound booth, or shoveling a driveway for an elderly neighbor. Young men need to know that serving is not done to be noticed. Whitney continues, “Motives matter in the service we offer to God.”⁵⁵ The heart of why someone serves is more important than what someone does to serve. The spiritual discipline of service also helps a young man think of himself less. Willard writes, “I may also serve another to train myself away from arrogance, possessiveness, envy, resentment, or covetousness. In that case, my service is undertaken

⁵² Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 161.

⁵³ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 156.

⁵⁴ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 143.

⁵⁵ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 144.

as a discipline for the spiritual life.”⁵⁶ Serving others helps young men focus on others. Jesus led by example by serving others while on earth. Young men should be challenged to live out their love for Jesus by looking for the needs of others.

Young men who want to pursue godliness need to be encouraged to understand and practice spiritual disciplines. They need to be made aware that an enemy seeks their destruction. First Peter 5:8 says, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” The devil, and his evil intent, needs to be taken seriously. To combat the enemy, spiritual disciplines need to become part of a young man’s life. If he practices the spiritual disciplines of Bible reading and study, prayer, worship, Bible memorization, and service, then he will develop habits that will help him become more like Jesus.

Educational Philosophy on How Boys Learn

In God’s creative design He made men and women different in many ways. One of the differences is in how they process and remember information. In general, men and women learn differently. In *Wild Things: The Art of Nurturing Boys*, Stephen James and David Thomas point out, “The development of the male brain from birth through boyhood to manhood is quite different from the same process in girls.”⁵⁷ This difference in brain development has an effect on how boys learn. Abigail Norfleet James states, “Upon entrance to school, the average girl simply is cognitively more ready for school tasks than the average boy of the same chronological age.”⁵⁸ This does not mean a boy cannot learn; just that he learns differently. For instance, it is believed that girls’ brains use less power when performing verbal activities and boys’ brains use less power for

⁵⁶ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 182.

⁵⁷ Stephen James and David Thomas, *Wild Things: The Art of Nurturing Boys* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2009), 115.

⁵⁸ Abigail Norfleet James, *Teaching the Male Brain: How Boys Think, Feel, and Learn in School* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2015), 26.

spatial activities.⁵⁹ As boys and girls grow, different parts of the brain grow faster depending on gender. The amygdala grows faster in boys and the hippocampus grows faster in females.⁶⁰ Because of this difference in brain growth, James states that boys tend to do better in “areas of vocabulary, basic arithmetic, reading single words, and total estimated intellectual ability.”⁶¹ The growth in the hippocampus gives girls the advantage in “spelling, reading, and verbal intelligence.”⁶² The differences affect how boys and girls learn in school.⁶³ It is important for a teacher to know how boys learn so they can teach in a way that helps boys remember and apply what is taught. James and Davis share, “As boys develop, they learn primarily in three ways: visually, spatially, and experientially. Schools, on the other hand, are mostly auditory, sedentary, and intellectual.”⁶⁴ This section will look at how boys learn visually, spatially, experientially/kinesthetically and how teachers can use this knowledge to tailor lessons to help boys learn.

Visual Learners

Boys tend to learn better when taught using visual cues. If instructions or guidance are given only by verbal means, then there is a good chance a boy will not remember much of what is said. He needs visual cues to help him hear, learn, and remember. James notes, “Boys tend to acquire information easily through visual methods,

⁵⁹ For more information, see Ian J. Deary, Lars Penke, and Wendy Johnson, “The Neuroscience of Human Intelligence Differences,” *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 11 (2010): 201-11.

⁶⁰ For more information, see J. N. Giedd et al., “Sexual Dimorphism of the Developing Human Brain,” *Progress in Neuropsychopharmacol and Biological Psychiatry* 21, no. 8 (November 1997): 1185-201.

⁶¹ James, *Teaching the Male Brain*, 18.

⁶² James, *Teaching the Male Brain*, 18.

⁶³ For more information, see Deborah A. Yurgelun-Todd, William D. Killgore, and Christina B. Cintron, “Cognitive Correlates of Medial Temporal Lobe Development across Adolescence: A Magnetic Resonance Imaging Study,” *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 96, no. 1 (2003): 3-17.

⁶⁴ James and Thomas, *Wild Things*, 141.

particularly if the information involves pictures and graphs rather than words.”⁶⁵ James and Thomas help explain this concept: “Another way of saying this is that a boy’s brain turns on when he *sees* words, whereas a girl’s brain responds more readily to *hearing* words.”⁶⁶ A boy may quickly stop listening when hearing a voice continue to talk for a long time. If there are pictures, graphs, or charts shared with what is being said then there is a much greater chance a boy will remember what is being taught. James makes it clear when she says, “Boys like to look at objects in motion whereas girls do not.”⁶⁷ If looking at objects in motion helps get a boy’s attention, then a teacher needs to find ways to present material in a way that is visually stimulating and memorable. Using visual methods when teaching is one way to help boys learn.

Spatial Learners

Boys also tend to be spatial learners. They like to use their imagination to turn objects around in their mind. Boys also like to figure out how things work. James explains, “This is the reason why boys are so interested in taking mechanical objects apart.”⁶⁸ Boys are not afraid to take things apart to figure out why something works as it does. They may even use the same parts and put them together in a different manner to see if they can make something new. James and Thomas point out, “The male brain is also hardwired to be strong at spatial relationships. Boys have an extraordinary ability to navigate building and design projects.”⁶⁹ Evidence of this spatial ability can be found in young boys building with Legos. Boys can use their spatial skills and imagination to build many different things without even looking at directions. They like to take apart what they have built and build

⁶⁵ James, *Teaching the Male Brain*, 44.

⁶⁶ James and Thomas, *Wild Things*, 141-42.

⁶⁷ James, *Teaching the Male Brain*, 224.

⁶⁸ James, *Teaching the Male Brain*, 78.

⁶⁹ James and Thomas, *Wild Things*, 123.

something completely different, using their imagination. As boys get older in school and start taking higher level math classes, it is believed that being spatial learners helps when taking classes like Geometry. James points out, “Many math teachers believe that there is a relationship, especially with respect to geometry.”⁷⁰ As they rotate things in their mind, it helps solidify what they are learning. A teacher that wants to reach boys or young men needs to find ways to present the material in a way that excites and challenges spatial learners.

Experiential/Kinesthetic Learners

One of the greatest ways boys learn is through experiential and kinesthetic learning. I use these two terms together because kinesthetic learning involves movement and experiential learning involves doing something. These two methods of learning are closely related. Boys learn better when they are actively involved in the lesson. James and Thomas share, “Boys also learn by doing. They learn best when allowed to experience and practice a task, skill, or concept and then talk about what they learned.”⁷¹ Boys need to practice what is being taught. When applicable, they should struggle to learn the skill. Once they have struggled and hopefully learned the skill, it is important for them to talk about what they learned. This will build confidence and help them practice verbal skills when communicating what they learned. Competition can also help boys learn. Michael Gurian believes, “Competition, for boys, is a form of nurturing behavior.”⁷² Most boys enjoy competition. A teacher can use the experience of competition in the classroom to help boys focus on a task and achieve learning goals. Competition helps boys learn without even realizing they are being taught a lesson.

⁷⁰ James, *Teaching the Male Brain*, 77.

⁷¹ James and Thomas, *Wild Things*, 146.

⁷² Michael Gurian, *The Wonder of Boys* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1996), 29.

Boys do not learn as well when a teacher stands up and continually talks about a subject. James and Thomas suggest, “The more words a teacher or parent uses, the greater the odds that a boy will tune you out.”⁷³ Boys should be given tasks or projects after minimal instruction. They may struggle to figure out how to solve a problem, but once they solve it, they have a better chance of remembering what they learned because they were actively involved in the process. James declares, “Boys are more likely to remember material when they are actively engaged in the lesson.”⁷⁴ It may take longer to work through curriculum when students are actively engaged in the lesson, but what is taught has a better chance of transitioning from knowledge to life application. James and Thomas explain, “By setting up situations in which our boys can learn, grow, risk, succeed, or fail, we create opportunities for them to teach themselves important lessons about everything from math to morality. Boys learn best when life is their teacher.”⁷⁵ Boys learn through trial and error and experience. A great teacher knows how to incorporate opportunities for boys to learn through experience so a lesson will be learned.

Teaching Boys

Boys tend to be visual, spatial, and experiential learners. A great teacher must use this knowledge to develop lessons that will be task-oriented with hands-on learning opportunities. In his book *The Seven Laws of the Learner: How to Teach Almost Anything to Practically Anyone*, Bruce Wilkinson states, “The teacher is responsible to cause the student to learn.”⁷⁶ This is a bold declaration. Some teachers may believe they have accomplished their job because they have presented all the information in the curriculum. But if the students did not learn, then they did not teach well. A great teacher must

⁷³ James and Thomas, *Wild Things*, 167.

⁷⁴ James, *Teaching the Male Brain*, 226.

⁷⁵ James and Thomas, *Wild Things*, 151.

⁷⁶ Bruce Wilkinson, *The Seven Laws of the Learner: How to Teach Almost Anything to Practically Anyone* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 1992), 38.

understand he is responsible to instill a desire for learning and give opportunities for learning to take place daily in the classroom. Wilkinson continues, “Every master teacher I know shares the mindset that it is his or her responsibility to cause the student to learn.”⁷⁷ The personal ownership of helping every boy learn drives a great teacher to think outside the box when teaching. Edward Fergus, Pedro Noguera, and Margary Martin found this to be true when they completed a three-year study of seven single-sex black and Latino male schools. When they talked to the educators in these schools, they “were struck by the passion, zeal, and dedication with which these educators pursued their goals.”⁷⁸ These educators took the education of the boys in their care personally. They had goals for their boys and worked tirelessly to see that they do well in school.

Great teachers must also look for ways to make lessons relevant to boys. If a teacher wants to teach how to write a paper well, then he could let the boys write about something that interests them. When teaching math, a teacher could show how incorrect math could cause a bridge to collapse or building to fall. If the teacher shows a video of a bridge or building collapsing because the engineers made a mistake, he will peak the interests of the male students. The teacher can then introduce the importance of learning how to do math the right way. A teacher that is passionate to help boys learn will find creative ways to reach them.

Great teachers of young men must also be aware of being a role model to the boys in their care. One of the first things a teacher can do is hold high expectations for the boys in the class. Fergus, Noguera, and Martin believe, “An optimal situation would be one where key people in a student’s life—teachers, other students, and parents—hold academic excellence and high academic expectations as normative.”⁷⁹ Young men need

⁷⁷ Wilkinson, *The Seven Laws of the Learner*, 16.

⁷⁸ Edward Fergus, Pedro Noguera, and Margary Martin, *Schooling for Resilience: Improving the Life Trajectory of Black and Latino Boys* (Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2014), 24.

⁷⁹ Fergus, Noguera, and Martin, *Schooling for Resilience*, 132.

to see that academic excellence is something to strive for and is attainable with hard work. They should also be introduced to other men that believe education is important, and that education made a difference in their life. During their three-year study of male schools, Fergus, Noguera, and Martin noticed that the principals repeatedly shared “about the importance of exposing the students to positive, adult males of color who exhibit the character traits they seek to instill in students. The goal of such exposure is to make it possible for the boys in these schools to attach a different vision of masculinity to an actual person.”⁸⁰ A great teacher will introduce other male role models to the boys in his care. Second, a teacher needs to genuinely get to know the boys in the class. In *Teaching Boys Who Struggle in School: Strategies That Turn Underachievers into Successful Learners*, Kathleen Palmer Cleveland states, “A secure teacher-student relationship encourages the underachieving boy to accept the risks of learning, and second, a supportive classroom culture encourages him to persist through both the trials and the errors of learning without shutting down.”⁸¹ Boys do not like to fail in front of others. A role model teacher understands this and helps boys take risks to grow academically and encourages them if they fail. Failure is a great teacher for boys. The importance of a caring and supportive teacher that understands how boys learn cannot be overstated.

Once teachers understand that boys tend to learn visually, spatially, and experientially/kinesthetically, then they must apply this knowledge to how they will teach spiritual disciplines. The easiest way to teach about spiritual disciplines is to talk about them for the whole class period. This is not helpful to boys learning and applying the material. For instance, the spiritual discipline of Bible study should be highly visual and experiential. Once an example is shown of how to study the Bible by listing observations or breaking down sentence structure, the students should be given time to practice this by

⁸⁰ Fergus, Noguera, and Martin, *Schooling for Resilience*, 41.

⁸¹ Kathleen Palmer Cleveland, *Teaching Boys Who Struggle in School: Strategies That Turn Underachievers into Successful Learners* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2011), 68.

themselves or with a classmate. The best way a boy can learn how to understand and develop a prayer life is to spend time in prayer. The beginning of the lesson should teach about the subject of prayer and then boys should be given time to get quiet, possibly outside, and practice praying to God. Worship, Bible memorization, and service should all be taught with a hands-on mentality with visual examples to help boys understand and learn how to practice these important spiritual disciplines.

Conclusion

Biblical discipleship is the cornerstone to understanding and practicing spiritual disciplines. Young men need to be challenged to go from knowing the Bible to obeying the Bible. What is taught must transfer from the head to the heart. Spiritual disciplines help young men solidify what they believe and begin to live out their faith.

Spiritual disciplines help young men grow in their faith. Bible reading and study help take the focus off oneself and put it on the Lord. It teaches young men what matters to God and how to live for Him. Prayer helps young men focus on God's desires for himself and others. Communication with the Holy Creator is a blessing and should be practiced often each day. Evangelism helps young men focus on the redemptive supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. The discipline of daily looking for opportunities to invite others to follow Jesus should be practiced. Worship is another spiritual discipline that helps young men put their focus on God and not self. There are many ways to worship, such as singing, giving, praying, meditation, prayer, and preaching. Worship is a spiritual discipline that can take place often throughout the day. Equipping young men to understand and practice the spiritual discipline of worship will help them focus on God and what pleases Him. Bible memorization is a spiritual discipline that is key to spiritual growth. Hiding God's Word in one's heart will help him think about what pleases God and encourage him to stand strong when faced with temptation. A mind full of God's Word is a great weapon against the forces of evil. The spiritual discipline of service flows out of a heart of worship. A young man that understands what God has done for him will look for

ways to follow Jesus's example and serve others. Understanding and practicing spiritual disciplines are vital to the spiritual growth of young men.

Finally, knowing how boys learn is important when teaching spiritual disciplines. An excellent teacher will understand that boys tend to learn visually, spatially, and experientially. Understanding and practicing spiritual disciplines is hard work and takes time. Lessons should be taught in a manner that is attractive to boys without compromising the benefits of developing the habit of practicing spiritual disciplines.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

This chapter explains the development and implementation of my project to equip the eighth-grade boys of Immanuel Christian School to understand and practice spiritual disciplines. I began teaching my project to the eighth-grade boys on Wednesday, August 31, 2022 and the last class was Monday, November 7, 2022.

Project Preparation

The preparation for my project began in the Fall of 2021 when I took *Applied Empirical Research* with Joseph Harrod. During this class I designed a research proposal related to my project. The research proposal was the basis for the pre-project survey. I completed my research proposal with the intent of completing the project with select eighth-grade boys at ICS. A few classmates reviewed my survey, gave feedback, and I made appropriate changes to finalize the survey for my project.¹

The second class that helped me prepare for my project was *Foundations of Teaching*. In this class I narrowed down the spiritual disciplines I wanted to teach, organized the order of teaching lessons, and wrote the lesson plans for the eight lessons to cover six spiritual disciplines. I turned in my curriculum on January 16, 2022, to Matthew Haste. On February 4, 2022, I received my grade of 96/100 on the assignment.

On July 26, 2022, I sent my lesson plans to an expert panel to ensure it was biblically accurate, biblically age-appropriate, and relevant to male students. A Curriculum Evaluation Tool was also sent to gather their feedback.² The expert panel

¹ See appendix 1.

² See appendix 2.

consisted of an ICS middle school Bible teacher, middle school principal, Head of School Emeritus, ICS high school Bible teacher, Immanuel Bible Church's Director of middle school ministries, Pastor of student ministries, Pastor of discipleship and family ministry, the former Senior Vice President for the Association of Christian Schools International and current ICS Interim Administrator, and a retired Head of School. I received feedback from everyone except the retired Head of School. I sent multiple emails to him but did not receive any correspondence. I assume he is no longer receiving email at the address I have for him. I believe the caliber and number of men that did respond gave me a well-rounded response of my curriculum. The feedback I received was very positive with a 100 percent mark of meets or exceeds the sufficient level.

Before I could begin my project, I compiled the information for my Research Profile. I completed my Research Profile and sent it to Matthew Haste on June 7, 2022. On June 13, I received confirmation that the Professional Doctoral Studies office had approved my Research Profile. Later in the summer, I looked at the PDF that was attached to the confirmation email and realized that only 31 of my 52 assessment questions were included. I emailed Matthew Haste the updated Research Profile with all fifty-two questions and received approval that evening.

On August 16, 2022, I emailed the parents of the eighth-grade boys to share the opportunity for their sons to take my class. I explained how the spiritual disciplines class would be offered during small group time, the number of weeks in the class, and the spiritual disciplines that would be covered. Parents were asked to sign the Agreement to Participate Parental Consent form and email it back to me if they would like their sons to participate. Collection of the consent forms was slow, so I sent a reminder email August 25. I also sent a few text messages on August 28 to individual parents reminding them to send in the form if they wanted their sons to participate. The last day for parents to send me the Parental Consent form was August 28. A total of eighteen boys signed up to take the class.

I wanted to use a Google survey for my pre- and post-assessment. I had not set up a Google survey before, so I asked the middle school principal for help. He answered my questions and showed me how to set up the survey. The survey was ready a week before the class was scheduled to meet. The Library Media Specialist helped me get the information I needed to instruct the boys on how to log-in to their account to complete the survey.

To prepare for my first class I reserved a cart of laptops so the boys could complete the pre-survey. I also confirmed which room I would use for my class. On August 29 I met with the middle school principal to discuss options and we finalized which room would be best.

The final preparation for my project was to email the boys and give them details about the first class. I sent the first email on August 29. The email welcomed them to the class and shared my excitement for the time we would spend together learning about spiritual disciplines. The survey link was included in the email with a reminder not to complete the survey until we were together in our first class. On August 30 I sent a few individual emails to boys that signed up after the first email was sent out.

Project Implementation

Week 1

The first class period with the eighth grade boys was August 31. I began the class period explaining the purpose and goal of the class. The purpose of the class was for the boys to understand the role of spiritual disciplines in their lives and to begin practicing a few of them. Next, I explained that the class was a project for my doctoral studies and I had been looking forward to this moment for a long time. The boys were told that their parents had given permission for me to give an assessment to learn what they already knew about spiritual disciplines. They logged in to their school email account and opened the welcome email I sent them a few days prior to class. A few had problems accessing their email so I spent time helping them get into their account. Once everyone had clicked

on the survey link, I read the opening paragraph explaining the survey and how the results would be used. It was clarified that answers would be confidential. I stressed to the boys that this survey would not be graded. I needed their honest answers and that is why the results would be confidential. I wanted the boys to understand that their honesty would help me design lessons to meet the boys where they were at spiritually. I would not think less of them regarding any answers they would give on the survey because I would not know their specific answers. This confidentiality carried over into what was discussed in class or on assignments I would give them throughout our time together. The boys spent about ten minutes completing the survey.

Once the survey was completed, I began to teach the introduction to the course. I pointed out Tom Brady and his seven Super Bowl championships. As a class we talked about what makes him a great football player. We looked at his rigorously disciplined daily diet to help him physically be the best he can be. The purpose of this introduction was to show the boys some of the discipline Tom Brady has for one specific purpose—to win a Super Bowl. At this point, I introduced spiritual disciplines and explained how Christians should practice them with a specific goal in mind—an eternal goal, which is to become more like Christ. For class participation I asked the boys what they thought when they heard the term *spiritual disciplines*. To keep their attention and make the class physically interactive, I brought a tennis ball and tossed it to a boy who had his hand in the air. He would catch the ball, share his thoughts, and throw the ball back. Donald Whitney’s definition of *spiritual disciplines* was displayed on the SMART board so everyone knew what I meant when using the term. The definition read, “Practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ.”³ Next, I shared the six spiritual disciplines we would be studying during our time together: Bible study, prayer, worship, Bible memorization, evangelism, and serving. Biblical reasons were

³ Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 4.

given for why understanding and practicing spiritual disciplines is important. I called on boys to read Psalm 119:11 and Colossians 3:1 to the class. These verses were just a few examples of Scripture pointing to the importance of living a godly life. I assumed they would be thinking that practicing spiritual disciplines would be difficult, so they were assigned to spend one minute with the person beside them answering the question, “Why is practicing spiritual disciplines so hard?” It was my goal for them to acknowledge that they know many reasons why believers do not make it a priority to practice spiritual disciplines. Their answers to these questions were insightful and encouraging. Finally, the class finished with me reading 1 Corinthians 9:24 and encouraging them to run as to win the prize.

After the first lesson, I went back to my office to review the survey results. The results gave me an idea of what the boys thought about the spiritual disciplines we would start discussing next week. This information helped me tailor my lessons to meet them where they were at in their understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines. I also emailed their parents to share my excitement for the first class and share what was discussed in class. It was my hope that the parents and boys would have good discussions about each class. I finished my email to the parents by expressing my appreciation that they signed the Agreement to Participate form so I could spend this quality time with their sons. I was encouraged when multiple parents came up to me and shared that their son came home talking about different things that were said and done during the first class. Finally, I emailed the boys sharing my excitement for the time we spent in class. I wanted to make sure they read the email, so I told them the first person to email me back and say, “Go Blue” would receive a prize in our next class. I did this so the boys would begin to eagerly look for my weekly emails to try and win a prize.

Week 2

The second class period with the eighteen boys was September 7. The class started with a candy bar being given to the first boy that responded to the first email I sent

the group the previous week. Once the giveaway was finished, I started the class period by having the boys pair up and make a list of as many things as they could remember from last week in one minute. Once the minute was up, each group shared one thing they remembered and I wrote the list on the board. The pairs were then given another minute to make a list of what influences ones' thinking and beliefs. Many of the boys were anxious to be the first ones to share with the group what they had written down. I again wrote on the board what they said influenced their thinking and beliefs. At this point I wrapped up the introduction by pointing out that everyone is influenced by what was shared in class. However, it is vital to one's spiritual growth that believers are influenced by the words of God found in Scripture. The definition of spiritual disciples by Whitney was put on the SMART board to reiterate why we would be spending our time studying the spiritual discipline of Bible study. The definition was repeated as a class multiple times to help them begin to remember it.

The boys opened their Bible to Matthew 4:1-11 to start the body of the lesson. One boy read the story of Jesus's temptation in the wilderness for the class. They shared different observations from the story. My goal was to help them see that Jesus used Scripture to fight Satan. Jesus had to know the Scripture to use it. Thus, the boys should know what the Bible says to live accordingly. The three terms I wanted the boys to remember about Bible study were observation, interpretation, and application. The three steps were projected in front of the class and were repeated multiple times. The boys were split into three groups and each group called out one of the three steps. Repetition was used to help them remember the steps.

Once the three steps were repeated multiple times, each boy received a piece of paper with Acts 1:8 on it.⁴ I left room on the bottom of the page for them to write. They put this paper to the side while I began to teach about observation. We discussed what they

⁴ See appendix 3.

thought the term *observation* meant. I shared questions they should ask when observing a passage of Scripture, such as, “What does it say?” and “Are there any repeated words or phrases?” Once we had discussed how to observe a passage of Scripture, I gave them one and half minutes to write down as many observations about Acts 1:8 as they could. When finished, each boy shared one observation with the class. This class activity was helpful to show them that they can observe things and develop the skill to do it better. The lesson continued as we talked about interpretation. I stressed that there is only one correct interpretation to a passage of Scripture. Questions like “What does it mean?” are important to ask after observing a passage. It was discussed that the proper interpretation of Acts 1:8 was Jesus’w desire for the disciples to share the gospel starting close to home and spreading out around the world. The final step in the Bible study method was application. The boys were encouraged to ask questions such as, “What difference does it make?” and “How does this apply to me?” The class then shared how Acts 1:8 could be applied to their lives. They shared different places they could share the gospel, such as athletic teams, neighborhood friends, family members, and classmates. Throughout the lesson I would act like I forgot the three steps of Bible study I was teaching them, and they would repeat them loudly to me.

Once the class period was over, I sent an email to the parents sharing details of what was discussed in class. I shared about observation, interpretation, and application, and how their sons learned about and practiced them. The email to the parents concluded with encouragement to read a Bible verse after dinner and have their son explain the three steps of Bible study and then do them together as a family. I also sent an email to the boys reiterating what was discussed in class.

Week 3

On Monday, September 12, I began preparing for the third class. I spent time reviewing lesson plans and making a slideshow to follow the lesson. I included pie graphs from the pre-survey to show the boys their viewpoints about the week’s subject—prayer.

On Tuesday evening I looked at everything one more time to make sure I was ready. Wednesday morning I printed off the words of Proverbs 3:5–6 so they would each get a piece of paper with the verse to be used during the lesson. The boys eagerly came to class Wednesday afternoon, and we quickly reviewed the previous week’s lesson. They loudly shared with me the three steps to Bible study. We then reviewed Whitney’s definition for spiritual disciplines.

To introduce the spiritual discipline of prayer I shared what took place at my home the night before. I had some high school boys over for dinner and invited a Washington Wizards basketball player, Anthony Gill, to join us. We spent the evening playing basketball and enjoying dinner. During the dinner the boys asked Anthony different questions about basketball and life. We got to know him better because of the conversation and time spent together. At this point in the story I pivoted to the fact that if we want to become more like Christ, we need to spend time with Him. One spiritual discipline that allows us to spend time with the Lord is prayer.

To continue the focus on prayer I split the boys into pairs and gave three minutes to list all the different times they thought prayer was mentioned in the Bible. This was not to be an exhaustive list, but to get the boys thinking about when prayer was discussed. Once the three minutes were up each group shared one item off their list. This exercise helped them see that there are many examples of prayer in the Bible. I shared with the class the example of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. I read Matthew 26:39, 42, and 44 to the class. I then pointed out that Jesus would get up early and go to a quiet place and pray. We discussed that if Jesus thought prayer was important, it should also be an important part of our lives. To finish this portion of the lesson, I read 1 Peter 5:7 to show that God cares enough to hear our prayers.

The focus of our time together was on the prayer technique using Adoration (A), Confession (C), Thanksgiving (T), and Supplication (S). Sometimes one’s mind can wander during prayer, so ACTS was introduced so the boys could focus their prayer time

on Scripture. At this time, the Proverbs 3:5-6 worksheets were passed out and below the passage A, C, T, and S were spaced out on the bottom of the page.⁵ I read the verse and explained that we would be practicing how to pray ACTS with Proverbs 3:5-6. I started by discussing what adoration meant. To help them think about adoration, I asked, “How does this passage lead me to praise God for who He is?” In this section of their prayer they could start with, “Father, you are . . .” We moved on to confession. I asked, “How does this passage lead me to confess my sins?” The boys were encouraged to look at the passage and admit their weaknesses and failures. The statement, “Forgive me for . . .” was shared with the boys when they thought about confession. The third step in the ACTS process is thanksgiving. The question, “How does this passage lead me to thank God for what He has done?” was given to help them think through what they could specifically be thankful for because of Proverbs 3:5-6. “Thank you for . . .” was given to help them with the thanksgiving part of their prayer. The last step in praying through ACTS is supplication. The boys admitted the majority of their prayers were asking God for material things. I pointed out that supplication asks, “How does this passage lead me to ask God’s help for others and myself?” When praying they could start with, “Please help . . .” Once we had worked our way through what ACTS stood for, I gave them time to quietly read Proverbs 3:5-6 and make a list under each letter of the acronym on their paper. They worked quietly and completed this task. I asked the boys to share what they had written for adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. This time of sharing was good for them to hear the perspective of their classmates and realize there is a great deal they could glean from slowly praying through Scripture. The class period ended quickly, and the boys were encouraged to find a verse or two and to pray through them using this method before we would meet again.

⁵ See appendix 4.

Once the class was over, I went back to my office and sent an email to the boys. They were encouraged to share with their parents what ACTS stood for and how it could be used to pray. To conclude the email, I asked them to email me what ACTS stood for. The first one to respond would receive a prize, but my goal was to help them remember what we discussed in class by repetition. They may think it is a fun competition, which it is, but it is also to help them better remember what was taught. On Thursday evening I sent an email to the parents with a recap of how ACTS can be used to pray through Scripture and encouraged them to ask their sons what was taught in class and practice it together during the week.

Week 4

The spiritual discipline of worship was the focus of week 4. The goal of looking at worship as a spiritual discipline was two-fold. First, I wanted the boys to look at different forms of worship, and second, ask how these different forms help them grow in their relationship with Jesus. To introduce the lesson, a few pie graphs giving a visual representation about what the group thought about worship were shown. The boys could see that they believed there were many ways to worship but they could not explain why worship is important in their life. The collected data also showed that the majority of the boys get distracted when trying to worship.

The body of the lesson started with the boys answering the question, “What do you think of when you hear the word worship?” As I thought, most of their answers focused on singing. I acknowledged that singing is a form of worship but there are many ways to worship the Lord. Before the lesson continued, I asked them why we worship. They shared that we worship because we are thankful for what God has done for us. I wanted them to see that Scripture also tells believers to worship. I put Psalm 95:6 on the SMART board and we all read together: “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker.” The lesson continued by asking the boys how they would define worship. I gave them a chance to share and then I gave my definition: “To

give proper worth to God, to magnify his name.”

The remainder of the lesson focused on different forms of worship. We looked at baptism, practicing the Lord’s Supper, listening to a sermon, Bible study, prayer, and singing as different forms of worship. As we were reaching the end of the lesson I put a quote by Whitney on the SMART board: “The worship of God makes believers more godly because people become like their focus. We emulate what we think about.”⁶ The boys were encouraged to practice the different forms of worship we discussed to help keep their focus on God. The class time ended with the junior high youth director playing his guitar and leading the boys in singing all five verses of “Amazing Grace.” As the boys were dismissed, I was encouraged to hear them singing “Amazing Grace” in the hallways.

Later in the afternoon I emailed the parents and shared the details of the lesson on worship. I told them that we used Psalm 95:6 as one of the main reasons we should worship God. The email concluded with the encouraging news that the boys left the class singing in the hallways. I also emailed the boys to recap the lesson. The challenge this week was for them to share with me the reference and verse we discussed in class. I did this to continue to encourage notetaking.

Week 5

The week of September 26 to October 1 was fall testing week at ICS. The daily schedule was altered to allow for testing in the morning and classes in the afternoon. This meant my Wednesday afternoon time slot with the boys was not an option. I talked with the middle school principal, and we were able to re-schedule the class for Friday afternoon. Earlier in the week I emailed the boys’ parents to let them know of the change. I also told the boys multiple times during the week that the class would meet Friday afternoon instead of Wednesday. When Friday afternoon arrived, all the boys came directly to class.

Class time started with a review of worship from the previous week. We

⁶ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 114.

reviewed why worship is a spiritual discipline and the many forms of worship. I stressed that spiritual disciplines do not save us—we practice spiritual disciplines to become more like Christ. As we worked through our time together, I wanted to make sure the boys did not see these disciplines as a list of things they must do to earn salvation. The focus of the lesson shifted to Bible memorization and multiple pie charts were shown to help them see the thoughts they shared on the pre-survey. The majority believe that Bible memorization is important but do not have a specific plan on how to memorize Scripture.

Psalm 119:11 was posted on the SMART board for the class to read: “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.” I then asked why we memorize Scripture. By reading this verse it became clear that one reason is to help keep us from sin. Each boy received a piece of paper with 1 Timothy 4:12 at the top with the nine steps I was going to share with the boys in the lesson.⁷ Since the lesson consisted of many steps, I wanted the boys to have everything written down in front of them, and on the SMART board, to help them stay focused during the lesson.

The first step in the memorization process was to read the entire passage out loud ten times. The whole class practiced this as we read 1 Timothy 4:12. It was good to do this so the boys could see that reiteration is important. The second step was to say the reference three times. The class then repeated the reference three times together. The memorization process continued with saying the reference and the first phrase three times. I asked the boys what they thought the first phrase of 1 Timothy 4:12 would be to keep interaction in the lesson. They agreed on the first phrase of the verse and said the reference and first phrase three times. The fourth step was to add each phrase and say it three times. We continued this practice with a couple phrases but stopped before going through the whole verse for the sake of time. I mentioned each of the remaining phrases and shared that the next step was to say the entire passage perfectly three times. The boys said the

⁷ See appendix 5.

verse, including the reference, three times perfectly. Step 6 in the memorization process was to write out the passage by hand and give it a title. The boys were given time in class to write the verse on the paper I gave them earlier in the lesson. They each shared their title with the class.

We quickly reviewed the seventh step, which was to type the passage on a computer and save it. They were encouraged to save the Bible verse in a file titled, “Favorite Bible Verses.” Unfortunately, we did not have time to do this in class. The eighth step in the memorization process was to pray the passage as a conversation with God. This was a great opportunity to show how the previous lesson about praying using the ACTS method could be used to help Bible memorization. I acted like I had forgotten what ACTS stood for and the boys loudly shared in unison that ACTS stood for adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. The final step in the Bible memorization process was to live the passage and teach it to someone else. I spent time encouraging the boys that memorizing Scripture should change us. We do not memorize Scripture just to know it, we memorize it to change our life to become more like Christ.⁸

The final steps for this lesson took place Saturday morning, Oct. 1. I emailed the parents with a recap of the lesson. They were encouraged to ask their sons if they remembered the nine steps to Bible memorization. I included the nine steps in the email because I wanted to encourage parents to try using these steps to memorize the Bible as well. The boys also received an email from me asking the nine steps we discussed in class. At the end of the email, I reminded them that we would not meet the following week because we would be on the eighth-grade retreat.

⁸ This Bible memorization method was used for many years by former Head of School, Steve Danish, at Immanuel Christian School.

Week 6

Evangelism was the spiritual discipline I studied with the boys in our sixth week together. The learning outcomes I desired for this study were that the boys would understand the importance of evangelism because of the Great Commission and understand how to share their faith. Before we started, we reviewed the nine steps to Bible memorization. Once we completed this review, Whitney's definition of spiritual disciplines was displayed on the SMART board to reiterate why we practice spiritual disciplines.

The class time started with the boys discussing with their neighbor what they enjoy talking about in their free time. Once time was up, each group shared one thing they liked to talk about, and their responses were recorded on the whiteboard. I used this to introduce the fact that the Bible tells us that we are to tell others about Jesus. I asked them what came to mind when they heard the word "evangelism." Some shared that they thought about what Jesus did on the cross while others said they thought about telling other people about Jesus. I shared that sometimes when I hear the word evangelism, I think of street preachers yelling at people as they walk down the street. I then asked them to take two minutes and write a definition of evangelism. It was insightful to have them read their definitions out loud. This allowed me to know what they thought about evangelism as I continued the lesson. For classroom purposes I shared that we would be using Whitney's definition of evangelism, which says, "Presenting Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to sinful people, in order that they may come to put their trust in God through Him, to receive Him as their savior, and to serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His church."⁹

As the lesson progressed, I had a young man read Matthew 28:18-20. We discussed Jesus's last words to his disciples and how we can apply them to our lives today. The argument was made that if it was important enough for Jesus to encourage his disciples to go and tell others about Him, then we should follow the same encouragement. I finished

⁹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life*, 120.

this section of class by sharing a personal story of a time when I was their age. I was playing basketball with another boy in the neighborhood, and he asked me spiritual questions, but I was scared and did not take the opportunity to tell him what I believed about Jesus. I wanted the boys to hear that I am not perfect, but also realize it is important for me to share about the love of Jesus when given the opportunity.

As I was preparing the lesson on evangelism, I really wanted the boys to think about their faith story. I asked them, if they had made a decision to follow Jesus, to write about it by answering three questions: (1) When did you ask Jesus to be your Lord and Savior?, (2) Why did you decide to follow Jesus?, and (3) How did it change your life? I told them that I appreciated honesty and if they had not accepted Jesus to be their Lord and Savior to answer two questions: (1) Why haven't you decided to trust in Jesus?, and (2) What questions do you have about following Jesus? I gave them twelve minutes to write their stories and encouraged them to write three to four sentences for each question. At the end of the twelve minutes I collected their stories. I told them I would read their stories but would not share them with others.

I made my way back to my office and immediately emailed the boys. It was fun to know many were checking their email now to answer the question I would send them. I also emailed the parents to share what we discussed in class. I wrapped up the email by sharing my appreciation for allowing me to spend time with their sons each week.

Week 7

The focus of the week 7 lesson was the spiritual discipline of serving. I started the class with a review of last week's topic: evangelism. A student read Whitney's definition of spiritual disciplines and it was stressed that we practice spiritual disciplines to become more like Christ, not to earn salvation. The class time transitioned to the topic of the week with the boys sharing the opposite of serving. We talked for a few minutes about the selfish nature of man and how we can be self-absorbed. The lesson then turned to what they can do to serve their family and classmates. The boys shared their answers

with the class, and it was good to have so many wanting to share their example.

The lesson continued by discussing why we should serve others. I wanted to make the clear declaration Christians serve others because that is what the Bible says to do. A student read Mark 10:45 and we talked about Jesus dying on the cross for sins. The boys also shared other ways Jesus served while on earth. Many pointed to his miracles and care for others. The next verses we read were John 13:12-16. In this passage Jesus had just finished washing the disciples' feet and he told them to follow his example. Psalm 100:2 was displayed on the SMART board, and we talked about what it meant to serve the Lord with gladness. They had a good grasp on what it meant to serve the Lord with the right perspective. I acknowledged that we do not always serve with gladness, but we must strive to do so. The last verse we looked at was Matthew 22:37-39. We can love God and our neighbors by serving them and looking for ways to put their needs above our own.

At this point in the lesson I had done most of the talking and I wanted to get the boys up and moving. I gave them time to get in groups of four for the next part of class. Once in groups, I told them to come up with a skit of how eighth grade boys can serve others at ICS. I gave them four minutes to come up with a skit. Once the time was up, each group acted out their skit in front of the class. The boys watching the skit guessed what the act of service was that the actors were trying to portray. The boys did a better job than I expected, and much laughter was heard during each skit.

To conclude the lesson on serving, each boy was asked to write down ten ways he could serve others at school. I passed out index cards and the boys made their list. I collected the index cards and told them I would pass them back the following Monday. For one week I wanted the boys to keep this index card in their pocket to help them stay focused on serving. I told them that if I asked to see their index card and they had it, I would give them a piece of candy. If they did not have it, they would owe me twenty push-ups. They were excited about this challenge.

The class time ended, and the boys prepared to head home for the day. I went back to my office and emailed their parents. The parents were encouraged to ask their sons questions about the lesson and challenge them to serve at home as well. I hoped that the skits and index cards would help them remember ways to serve.

Week 8

The week leading up to the last class was filled with excitement in the hallways. Each time the boys saw me they showed their index card that listed ten ways they could serve at ICS. One boy even showed me he had the index card in his pocket during soccer practice after school. The boys received candy if they could show me the card. A few boys left their index card at home and had to do twenty push-ups. It was all done in fun, and the boys enjoyed the challenge. This drew attention from their classmates to what was being taught in the spiritual disciplines class and the boys were given opportunities to share what they had been learning about serving.

The boys were on a field trip Wednesday, so our class was pushed to Friday afternoon. I emailed parents on Thursday to remind them of the class meeting on Friday. The boys also received an email from me reminding them about the change in day and time regarding the class. The post-survey link was included in this email.

The class started with the boys getting a laptop and logging in to their email. Once they found the email they clicked on the link and began taking the survey.¹⁰ I reminded them that their answers were confidential. After the boys completed the survey in class on Friday, they logged into a computer game site called Kahoot. I had prepared a fun twenty-question review game to remind the students what we studied.¹¹ It was a loud

¹⁰ Two boys were not in school for the week 8 class, so they were unable to complete the survey. I texted one of the boys' parents on Saturday, October 29, asking if they would have their son fill out the survey during the weekend. I received a text later that evening confirming he would complete the survey. On Monday, October 31, I asked the last boy to complete the survey.

¹¹ See appendix 6.

and fun time doing the Kahoot together. While the boys were competing against each other they were also being reminded what we learned each week.

The final activity of the class was having the boys write a letter to themselves. A concern I had was that the boys would get busy with other things and forget to start practicing spiritual disciplines. I gave them fifteen minutes to write a letter sharing (1) 3-4 things they learned about spiritual disciplines and (2) 1-2 spiritual disciplines they want to begin practicing and their plan to begin practicing those disciplines. I told the boys I would not read their letters and I wanted them to take their time to think through what they would write. Before class started, I asked the middle school administrative assistant to print off labels with each boy's name and address. I put the labels on the envelopes before class. When the boys were done writing their letter, I gave them their envelope. They checked the address, put their letter inside, and sealed it. The address was wrong on two of the labels so the boys wrote their correct address on the label and after class the administrative assistant printed off two new labels. The letters were put in the mail Monday, November 28.

On Saturday, October 29, I emailed the parents to thank them for the opportunity to teach their sons how to understand and practice spiritual disciplines. I shared that we have one more class scheduled on Monday, November 7. Tom Joyce, Pastor of Discipleship and Family Ministry at Immanuel Bible Church, agreed to share some of his story with the boys. Joyce is a former Top Gun fighter pilot, was in the Pentagon and thrown from his office chair when the plane hit September 11, 2001, and is now a pastor. I asked him to share highlights of his career and some of the spiritual disciplines he has been practicing and how it has made a difference in his life.

Week 9

Our last class together was Monday, November 7. We could not meet during our normal Wednesday time slot because of a school conflict. We instead met during the boys' electives period. Joyce came and shared about his time as a Top Gun fighter pilot,

and then continued by sharing his story of being in the Pentagon when the plane hit on September 11, 2001. He finished his time with the boys by sharing how Bible study, Bible memorization, and prayer are three spiritual disciplines that have been very important in his life. He shared how practicing these spiritual disciplines has helped him focus on Christ and grow in his faith. Joyce, to finish our time together, prayed for the boys to become men that love the Lord and live for Him.

Once class was done, I emailed the parents a synopsis of what Joyce shared with the boys. I shared how the boys were able to ask Joyce some insightful questions at the end of the class. The email ended with me thanking them for the privilege to teach their sons to understand and practice spiritual disciplines.

I sent one last email to the boys after class. I wanted to encourage them to continually look for ways to practice spiritual disciplines. Following Jesus can be hard, and I shared that I will always be available to meet one-on-one. I wanted the boys to know that I care about their spiritual journeys and am happy to help in any way I can.

CHAPTER 5

MINISTRY PROJECT EVALUATION

This project began with a desire to plant seeds in the life of the eighth-grade boys at ICS regarding what it means to understand and practice spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith. Throughout the process of developing and implementing this project, that desire grew. In this chapter I will evaluate the purpose and goals of this project, the strengths and weaknesses, and changes I would consider to strengthen the project. The chapter ends with theological and personal reflections and my concluding thoughts.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the eighth-grade boys at Immanuel Christian School in Springfield, Virginia to understand and practice spiritual disciplines. This purpose grew from a desire to see young men put roots on their faith and develop spiritual disciplines to help them stay on the narrow path of following Jesus. Students receive great biblical teaching at ICS, but dedicated time was not present to help them think about what spiritual disciplines are and how they can begin to practice them.

I have served at ICS long enough to see some of the young men grow up and walk away from their faith. It appears they knew all the right answers in school and acted in a positive way, but the truth of God's Word did not penetrate their heart. From these observations, my desire grew to equip young men to understand and begin practicing spiritual disciplines that can have a positive impact on their life for eternity.

Evaluation of the Project Goals

To gauge the success of the project, three goals were established. Each of these goals is evaluated in this section.

Goal 1

The first goal of this project was to assess the understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines among the eighth-grade boys at Immanuel Christian School. The goal was accomplished by having the boys complete the pre-survey before the first class. The pre-survey was given on August 31 so that I could study their answers before the first class discussing a specific spiritual discipline. The goal of having at least twelve eighth grade boys participate in this project was far exceeded when a total of eighteen participated in the class. Having served as a teacher and Assistant Head of School at ICS I was not surprised at the responses agreeing that spiritual disciplines are important. I was a little surprised by their lack of knowledge of how to practice spiritual disciplines. Most of the spiritual disciplines that were surveyed are discussed occasionally in Bible class but are not given a serious amount of time on why they are important habits to develop.

Goal 2

The second goal of this project was to develop an eight-week curriculum to teach the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, prayer, worship, Bible memorization, evangelism, and serving. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather a selection of spiritual disciplines the boys could begin to practice. In the *Foundations of Teaching* seminar I attended in January 2022, I completed lesson plans for my project as part of one of the assignments. This goal was reviewed by an expert panel of eight men involved in different aspects of Christian education. The panel reviewed each lesson plan and completed a rubric that ensured each lesson was biblically accurate, age-appropriate, and relevant to eighth grade boys. The feedback I received was encouraging, with only a few recommendations to the lesson plans. One of the best recommendations I received was to generate discussion on how grace empowers practicing of spiritual disciplines. A greater understanding of what God has done for us can provide the proper motivation to understand and practice spiritual disciplines. This goal was successfully met as over 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

Goal 3

The third goal of this project was to increase the understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines among the eighth-grade boys at Immanuel Christian School by teaching the eight-week curriculum. I used a post-class survey to measure the success of this goal. This goal was met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-class survey scores: $t_{(17)} = -5.691, p < .0001$.¹

I was particularly happy to see two outcomes when studying the results of the pre- and post-class survey. The change in answers for questions 8 and 12 were positive (see table 1). For question 8, 14 boys stated that they learned how to effectively study the Bible. Only 1 said his knowledge decreased. For question 12, 10 boys also claimed they were better equipped to explain to others how to pray. I find both of these results encouraging because I want the boys to effectively study the Bible on their own and know how to teach others how to pray. If they can teach others one way to pray, then they know how to pray using that method as well. The data showed that many of the boys grew in knowledge on how to effectively study the Bible and how to share with others how to pray.

Table 1. Encouraging observations from the pre- and post-class survey results

Question	Decrease	No Change	Increase
Q8. I can explain how to effectively study the Bible.	1	3	14
Q.12 I can share with others how to pray.	1	7	10

Strengths of the Project

The project had many strengths. First, the project was only offered to eighth-grade boys. This decision was made to allow for freedom in the classroom. The boys

¹ See appendix 7.

appeared comfortable sharing their honest thoughts and opinions. The lessons were prepared and taught with the mindset of how boys learn. Throwing a tennis ball to the person that wanted to speak, handing out candy, and acting out skits were a few of the kinesthetic learning opportunities the boys enjoyed.

The second strength of the project was the dedicated time given to each spiritual discipline. Each class, except for the first and last class, focused solely on one spiritual discipline. This intentional decision was made to help the boys think about one topic for the whole class period. Time was given in some of the classes to practice the spiritual discipline after we studied it. For instance, after studying how to pray through Scripture using the A.C.T.S. method, the boys were given an opportunity to practice in class. When we studied the spiritual discipline of evangelism, the boys wrote down their faith story. This helped them think through how they would share their faith with someone else. It also allowed me to collect their stories, read them, and write encouraging notes before returning the stories to them.

A third strength of the project was the weekly communication with the boys and their parents. Each week I sent an email to parents sharing what we talked about in class. I often encouraged them to ask their sons questions about what they learned. Communicating with parents helped the learning process continue at home. At the end of each parent email, I stressed my appreciation for the privilege to teach their sons about spiritual disciplines. I received many responses from parents thanking me for teaching their sons about ways to help them grow spiritually.

The last strength of the project was that each lesson was based on Scripture. It was stressed that they should practice spiritual disciplines because the Bible teaches us to, not because someone told them to. Each lesson contained Bible verses pointing to the need to practice the spiritual discipline we were focusing on that week. I wanted the boys to grasp that understanding and practicing spiritual disciplines should be part of their lives because the disciplines promote spiritual growth.

Weaknesses of the Project

While the project had its strengths there were areas that could be improved. There were two major weaknesses with this project—the class being tied to the school bell schedule and calendar. The time I was allotted to teach the boys was Wednesday after chapel. Sometimes the chapel speaker went long, and it reduced the amount of time I had to teach. Oftentimes the boys would come very energetic to class, and it would take a few minutes to calm them down as well. This started off most classes with less time than I had planned. Many of the lessons felt rushed. We did not have the time I wanted to read and discuss the Scripture passages that taught about each spiritual discipline. The verses would be read, and I had to quickly talk about the verse before moving on with the lesson. This did not allow for the depth of study in the Scriptures I had hoped to do with the boys. The short time also greatly limited opportunities to take the boys outside of the classroom to learn. I wanted to take the boys outside for a few lessons to make the learning more memorable, but we did not have enough time.

The school calendar was also a weakness of the project. Three of the class periods had to be completely moved from the regularly scheduled time. Two assemblies on separate Wednesdays pushed the class to the last period of the day and it was hard for the boys to focus. The boys also had a field trip on a Wednesday, so one class was postponed until the last period of the day on Friday. Friday afternoon is a difficult time to teach any academics, let alone spiritual disciplines. I also had to move classrooms twice to accommodate other classes that needed our usual space.

A final weakness of the project was my inability to line up special speakers. I wanted the boys to hear additional voices other than mine, but it proved difficult to bring others in to talk with the boys. I hoped to have a special speaker share during the evangelism lesson. I think it would have made a bigger impact on the boys to hear a first-hand account of seeing a life radically changed by Jesus because someone was bold enough to share his testimony with a lost soul.

What I Would Do Differently

There were many aspects of my project that I enjoyed and thought went well. However, if I had to do my project again, I would change a few things. First, I would take the boys away on a retreat-style trip for the project. Teaching about spiritual disciplines at school can make the lessons come across as academic and there is always a time crunch because the bell is going to ring. A two-and-a-half-day retreat would be a special time away from the school. There would not be any bells or pressing agenda to quickly finish a lesson. The whole weekend could be geared toward learning and practicing spiritual disciplines. Fun activities such as a challenge course, climbing wall, hiking, and zip line could be used to teach theological lessons that point to the importance of practicing spiritual disciplines. During the retreat, relationships would hopefully deepen amongst the boys and the male leadership. It would also give credence to the male leaders to have discussions with the boys throughout the year about their practice of spiritual disciplines.

Second, I would like to have a practice activity for every spiritual discipline that is taught. Once a spiritual discipline is studied, the boys would be given thirty minutes to practice what was discussed. This was not feasible during the project due to time constraints. Allowing the boys time to slow down and think about all aspects of a spiritual discipline may help them develop a passion to begin practicing it. A quiet time after each teaching period would allow students to ask questions like, “Why is this spiritual discipline important?” “How would practicing this spiritual discipline change my life five or ten years down the road?” “What is keeping me from practicing this spiritual discipline?” Giving time for answering these questions and practicing the different spiritual disciplines may allow room for the Holy Spirit to work in the life of each young man.

Third, I would like to have a ceremony the last evening of the retreat and invite each boy’s dad, or other significant man in his life, to join us. During the ceremony the boys would share the spiritual disciplines they learned while on the retreat. The dads would be given time to speak encouragement and truth into the lives of their sons. This time would be facilitated by me, and I would work with the dads before the retreat so

they would know what to expect. At the end of the ceremony there would be a time of prayer over the young men as they make decisions to begin practicing some of the spiritual disciplines learned on the retreat. My current project ended with a fun Kahoot game for review. The boys enjoyed it, but I think a ceremony with dads would help drive home the magnitude of practicing spiritual disciplines.

Finally, if I did this project again, I would limit the number of boys to twelve. Eighteen boys was a large number to try and have in-depth conversations. They were also easily distracted. A group of twelve would allow for more intimate conversations about the role of spiritual disciplines in a young man's life. It would also allow for more honest discussions of living out one's faith and give male chaperones better opportunities to get to know each boy.

Theological Reflections

Growing up in the church I do not remember hearing a lesson on spiritual disciplines. It may have been taught, but it did not stick in my memory or make an impact on my life. The boys at ICS have grown up hearing stories about the Bible, memorizing Bible verses, and being challenged to have a heart that longs for Jesus. I wanted this project to take their personal journey of following Jesus to a deeper spiritual level.

As I continued through my project, Psalm 1:1-3 that I studied and wrote about in chapter 2 came to mind. One of the goals of understanding and practicing spiritual disciplines is to become more like Christ. As it says in Psalm 1, a man is blessed when he meditates on God's law day and night. The result of this thinking is being like a tree planted by streams of water that produces fruit in season. I want these young men to understand and practice spiritual disciplines so they too will produce spiritual fruit in their lives.

One of the biggest highlights for me took place during the lesson on worship. The boys were able to recognize that there are many ways to worship the Lord besides singing. They were actively engaged in the lesson and shared many thoughts. At the end

of this lesson the junior high director from IBC came into class with his guitar and led us in singing all five verses to “Amazing Grace.” These cool eighth-grade boys sang loudly as we worshiped the Lord together. Some of the boys in the back of the room put their arms around each other and swayed back and forth as we sang. As a group we did not sound great, but our hearts were worshiping the Lord as men and that was special.

I also enjoyed the depth of study I did while writing chapter 2. I have not spent that much time studying and thinking about a passage of Scripture. Once I had studied and thought about the Scripture at length, I would read commentaries and other books about the passage. It was hard work but spiritually beneficial to study the Scriptures and commentaries and explain what the text was saying and how it can be applied to young men in 2022. This helped make the verses come alive and it was very rewarding in my own spiritual walk.

The last theological reflection is that spiritual growth takes time. This project was done knowing that most of the spiritual growth that may occur because of the lessons taught will happen away from my sight. This project was about planting the seeds of understanding and practicing spiritual disciplines. The young men in the class may not begin practicing spiritual disciplines right away, but what was taught may come back to them as they move on to high school, college, or once they start a career. Something may happen years down the road in their life that helps them remember what was taught in class and encourages them to get serious about their faith. I hope that many of the boys will begin practicing spiritual disciplines now but I also know that each boy will grow spiritually at his own pace. As the teacher, I must trust in God and know He has great plans for each of these boys.

Personal Reflections

I have always enjoyed working with youth and teaching in the classroom. Twelve years ago I moved into school administration, which took me away from daily interaction with students. While doing administrative duties I continued to feel my passion

come alive when I would step into a classroom to teach a lesson or speak in chapel. When I decided on this project, I was eager to spend quality time with the eighth-grade boys teaching them about spiritual disciplines that could change the trajectory of their lives.²

Teaching the eighth-grade boys every week reminded me how much I miss classroom interaction with students. There is an energy in the classroom that I thrive off and the eighth-grade boys kept me on my toes. I loved using a tennis ball as a classroom management tool to control who could talk in class. Throwing a ball in class and only being allowed to talk if you had the ball was simple, but kept the boys engaged and focused. The lively communication and great questions gave me a window into their lives and what they were thinking. I could feel myself quickly becoming attached to these boys and caring greatly for them.

A benefit I did not anticipate was the enjoyment I found studying the Scripture for the writing of chapter 2. It was nice to slow down and really study a passage. The commentaries and books I read were helpful to get a better grasp of what the author was trying to say. One commentary I enjoyed studying was Robert Yarborough's *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. Yarborough was clear in his detailed description of Paul's words in 1 Timothy 4: 7-12. His explanation of what each verse meant helped it come alive in my mind. It was nice to focus on four passages and really think about how they support the reasons for my project.

Finally, this project challenged me in my personal walk with the Lord. It was convicting to teach the eighth-grade boys to understand and practice spiritual disciplines when I do not practice them as much as I would like. Preparing for each lesson was a reminder for me on why practicing spiritual disciplines is important. I hope that every

² Students may disclose very sensitive struggles or emotions in a setting like this class. It is important to let students know they are greatly cared for and whenever possible, what they share will be confidential. There may be times when a teacher must follow school policy and notify administration or a student's parents if the information puts a child's life at risk.

boy in the class, including myself, will begin to practice a few of the spiritual disciplines we discussed to become more like Christ.

Conclusion

I end this project with one word—hope. It was true joy to spend eight weeks with these young men. We studied six different spiritual disciplines with the goal that they would begin to understand and practice them. We looked at Scripture and how the Bible commands us to practice these disciplines. It is my hope that these young men begin to practice a few of the spiritual disciplines. As they grow older, I hope the Holy Spirit will remind the boys what they learned in class and how it is applicable to their life. The eternal success of this project may not be seen until years down the road. It is my prayer that each of these eighteen boys will become men that are “like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers” (Ps 1:3). When the young men become adults and I have the opportunity to re-connect with them, my heart will be the same as John’s statement in 3 John 1:4: “I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.”

APPENDIX 1

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES SURVEY

The following survey was designed and administered to the eighth-grade boys in a spiritual disciplines class. The survey was given the first week of class to gather and study responses before teaching the first spiritual discipline the following week. This survey helped me achieve the first goal of assessing how much the eighth-grade boys understood and practiced spiritual disciplines. The survey was given a second time after the classes on spiritual disciplines were complete to analyze the data for any change in understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines increased, which measured the accomplishment of the third goal.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES ASSESSMENT

Agreement to Participate

The survey you are about to fill out is designed to show how much you know and understand about specific spiritual disciplines. This research is being conducted by Mr. Pinkley for purposes of gathering data needed for completing a doctoral project at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. The information you give will be kept confidential. To help ensure your confidentiality, your identification number will be your birthday (example: 04-02-1977). The information gathered will be used to help Mr. Pinkley design lessons on spiritual disciplines for 8th grade boys. Please take your time and answer each question honestly. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

Using the following scale, please circle the letters that corresponds to your feelings in response to, or in your understanding of, the following statements.

SD = Strongly Disagree D = Disagree N = Neutral A = Agree SA = Strongly Agree

1. I find reading the Bible interesting. SD D N A SA
2. Studying the Bible is boring. SD D N A SA
3. Reading the Bible is important to my spiritual growth. SD D N A SA
4. There is more to studying the Bible than just reading it. SD D N A SA
5. The Bible has some parts in it that are not true. SD D N A SA
6. God is happier with me when I read my Bible. SD D N A SA
7. Having knowledge of what the Bible says is important. SD D N A SA
8. I can explain how to effectively study the Bible. SD D N A SA
9. I can explain why studying the Bible is important. SD D N A SA
10. I can describe different methods to study the Bible. SD D N A SA
11. I can share how studying the Bible impacts my life. SD D N A SA
12. Praying is important to my relationship with Jesus. SD D N A SA
13. I understand how the Bible teaches me to pray. SD D N A SA
14. I can share with others how to pray. SD D N A SA
15. A strong prayer life is important to keep me from sinning. SD D N A SA
16. I tend to daydream when I pray. SD D N A SA

17. I only pray before meals. SD D N A SA
18. I have seen God answer some of my prayers. SD D N A SA
19. My prayers focus on my needs. SD D N A SA
20. I believe God hears my prayers. SD D N A SA
21. There are different ways to worship the Lord. SD D N A SA
22. It is easy for me to worship the Lord. SD D N A SA
23. I can explain the importance of worship with others. SD D N A SA
24. I look for ways to worship the Lord each day. SD D N A SA
25. I get distracted easily when I am supposed to be worshipping the Lord
SD D N A SA
26. God is happy with me when I worship Him. SD D N A SA
27. Singing is the most important form of worship. SD D N A SA
28. Understanding how worship affects my relationship with Jesus is important.
SD D N A SA
29. I enjoy memorizing Bible verses. SD D N A SA
30. It is important to memorize Bible verses. SD D N A SA
31. It is easy for me to memorize Bible verses. SD D N A SA
32. I do not like to memorize Bible verses. SD D N A SA
33. The Bible says I should memorize Bible verses. SD D N A SA
34. God is happier with me after I memorize Bible verses. SD D N A SA
35. Memorizing Bible verses is important to my spiritual growth. SD D N A SA
36. I can explain different ways to memorize Bible verses. SD D N A SA
37. The Bible says I am supposed to tell others about Jesus. SD D N A SA
38. I can tell someone what the Great Commission is. SD D N A SA
39. I get nervous telling my non-Christian friends about Jesus. SD D N A SA

40. I can give a biblical definition of evangelism. SD D N A SA
41. I can explain why telling others about Jesus is important. SD D N A SA
42. I believe Jesus died for sinners. SD D N A SA
43. Jesus loves me more when I tell others about Him. SD D N A SA
44. There is more to evangelism than telling people who Jesus is. SD D N A SA
45. The Bible commands Christians to serve others. SD D N A SA
46. It is hard for me to serve others. SD D N A SA
47. I can share ways Jesus served others in the Bible. SD D N A SA
48. I can explain why serving others is important. SD D N A SA
49. Serving others is important to my spiritual growth. SD D N A SA
50. I can explain different ways to serve others. SD D N A SA
51. I can share how serving others impacts my life. SD D N A SA
52. God is happier with me when I serve others. SD D N A SA

APPENDIX 2
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following evaluation rubric was sent to an expert panel consisting of eight men to give feedback on my curriculum. Two of the men are ICS Bible teachers, two are ICS administrators, one is an IBC pastor, one is the former Head of School at ICS, and the remaining two are the junior and senior high youth directors at Immanuel Bible Church. The rubric allowed the men to share if the curriculum was biblically accurate, age-appropriate, and relevant to male students. The rubric also allowed for comments.

Name of Evaluator: _____

Date: _____

Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Accuracy					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a spiritual discipline.					
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
Practicality					
The curriculum clearly details the importance and practice of spiritual disciplines.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to practice spiritual disciplines.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 3

BIBLE STUDY PRACTICE SHEET

The following worksheet was given to the boys in class after the lesson on the spiritual discipline of Bible study. The boys shared their observations, interpretation, and application of Acts 1:8.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Acts 1:8

APPENDIX 4

ACTS PRAYER WORKSHEET

The following worksheet was given to the boys in class after the lesson on the spiritual discipline of prayer. I wanted the boys to learn how to pray through Scripture using adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication (ACTS). They used the worksheet to practice ACTS with Proverbs 3:5-6.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6

A –

C –

T –

S –

APPENDIX 5

BIBLE MEMORIZATION STEPS

The following worksheet was given to the boys in class during the lesson on the spiritual discipline of Bible memorization. First Timothy 4:12 was used to practice and discuss the nine steps.

Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”

I Timothy 4:12

Bible Memorization Steps

1. Step 1: Read the entire passage out loud 10 times.
2. Step 2: Say the reference three times.
3. Step 3: Say the reference and first phrase three times.
4. Step 4: Add each phrase and say it three times.
5. Step 5: Say the entire passage perfectly three times.
6. Step 6: Write out the passage by hand and give it a title.
7. Step 7: Type the passage on a computer and save it.
8. Step 8: Pray the passage as a conversation with God.
9. Live the passage and teach it to someone else.

APPENDIX 6

KAHOOT SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES REVIEW

The following questions were used as a review tool once I had completed teaching the six spiritual disciplines. Kahoot was the platform I used because the boys are familiar with it, and they often use it in class. Each boy had a laptop and answered each question. The Kahoot game helped me observe what the boys had learned. It was also a way for them to have fun while being reminded what was taught about each discipline.

KAHOOT SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES REVIEW

- 1) How many spiritual disciplines did we study?
a) 5 **b) 6** c) 7 d) 8
- 2) What sport did we talk about the first week?
a) basketball b) baseball c) golf **d) football**
- 3) Which spiritual discipline did we use an acronym to help us practice it?
a) Serving b) worship **c) praying** d) evangelism
- 4) What book of the Bible has the verse, "I have stored up your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you."
a) **Psalms** b) Proverbs c) Leviticus d) Luke
- 5) Which always comes first? Application or Interpretation
a) Application **b) Interpretation**
- 6) Brenton hit Clayton in the head with a tennis ball during class one day
a) **True** b) False
- 7) The 'A' in A.C.T.S. stands for admission
a) True **b) False**
- 8) What does the 'T' in A.C.T.S. stand for?
a) Turkey b) Theology c) Tomorrow **d) Thanksgiving**
- 9) "Forgive me for..." is part of which letter in our study on prayer?
a) A **b) C** c) T d) S
- 10) How many Super Bowl rings does Tom Brady have?
a) 10 b) 5 **c) 7** d) 6
- 11) The definition of worship we used in class is, "To give proper worth to God, to magnify His name."
a) **True** b) False
- 12) Which of these was NOT a spiritual discipline we studied?
a) Evangelism b) Worship **c) Communion** d) Serving
- 13) What verses did we use to practice A.C.T.S.?
a) John 3:16 **b) Proverbs 3:5-6** c) Romans 3:23 d) John 1:1-2
- 14) Practicing communion in a form of worship.

- a) **True** b) False

15) What song did we sing in class?

- a) **Amazing Grace** b) Jesus loves me c) Who Let the Dogs Out? D) In Christ Alone

16) How many steps are there in the Bible memorization process?

- a) 6 b) 7 c) 8 **d) 9**

17) Which book of the Bible contains the verse, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve...”

- a) Matthew **b) Mark** c) Luke d) Clayton

18) What was the second spiritual discipline we studied?

- a) Bible study b) Worship **c) Prayer** d) Evangelism

APPENDIX 7

T-TEST RESULTS: ALL QUESTIONS

T-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means of All Questions		
	<i>Pre-test total</i>	<i>Post-test total</i>
Mean	193.2777778	208.5
Variance	192.8006536	78.38235294
Observations	18	18
Pearson Correlation	0.579231902	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	17	
t Stat	-5.691213373	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000013258	
t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
P(T<=t) two-tail	2.65158E-05	
t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Absalom, Alex, and Bobby Harrington. *Discipleship that Fits: The Five Kinds of Relationships God Uses to Help Us Grow*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.
- Arnold, J. Heinrich. *Discipleship*. Farmington, PA: Plough, 1994.
- Cleveland, Kathleen Palmer. *Teaching Boys Who Struggle in School: Strategies That Turn Underachievers into Successful Learners*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2011.
- Clifford, Richard J. *Psalms 1-72*. Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon, 2002.
- Collins, Raymond F. *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary*. The New Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.
- Constable, Thomas. *Job-Song of Songs*. Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, vol. 3. Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2012.
- _____. *Philippians-Philemon*. Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, vol. 10. Hurst, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2017.
- Conzelman, Hans, and Martin Dibelius. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972.
- Davidson, Robert. *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*. International Theological Commentary. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998.
- Davis, Andy. *An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture*. Greenville, SC: Ambassador, 2014.
- Deary, Ian J., Lars Penke, and Wendy Johnson. "The Neuroscience of Human Intelligence Differences." *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 11 (2010): 201-11.
- DeClassé-Walford, Nancy, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth Laneel Tanner. *The Book of Psalms*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2014.
- Dever, Mark. *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007.
- Earle, Ralph. *1-2 Timothy*. In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 339-418. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978.
- English, J. T. *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus*. Nashville: B & H, 2020.

- Fergus, Edward, Pedro Noguera, and Margary Martin. *Schooling for Resilience: Improving the Life Trajectory of Black and Latino Boys*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2014.
- Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. Special anniversary ed. Colorado Springs: HarperOne, 2018.
- Giedd, J. N., F. X. Castellanos, J. Rajapakse, A. C. Vaituzis, and J. L. Rapoport. "Sexual Dimorphism of the Developing Human Brain." *Progress in Neuropsychopharmacology and Biological Psychiatry* 21, no. 8 (1997): 1185-201.
- Gurian, Michael. *The Wonder of Boys*. New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1996.
- Guthrie, Donald. *Pastoral Epistles*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14. Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity, 1990.
- James, Abigail Norfleet. *Teaching the Male Brain: How Boys Think, Feel, and Learn in School*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2015.
- James, Stephen, and David Thomas. *Wild Things: The Art of Nurturing Boys*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2009.
- Keil, Carl Friedrich, and Franz Delitzsch. *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Vol. 5. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996.
- Kidner, Derek. *Psalms 1-72. Kidner Classic Commentaries*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008.
- Knight, George W., III. *The Pastoral Epistles*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992.
- Köstenberger, Andreas J. *Commentary on 1-2 Timothy & Titus*. Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation. Nashville: B & H, 2017.
- Lea, Thomas D., and Hayne P. Griffin. *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*. The New American Commentary, vol. 34. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992.
- MacArthur, John. *2 Timothy*. *MacArthur New Testament Commentary*. Chicago: Moody, 1995.
- _____. *Titus*. *MacArthur New Testament Commentary*. Chicago: Moody, 1996.
- Miller, Paul. *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2017.
- Morley, Patrick. *How God Makes Men*. Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2013.
- Mounce, William D. *Pastoral Epistles*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000.
- Mulholland, M. Robert, Jr. *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation*. Rev. ed. Nashville: Upper Room, 2000.
- Onwuchekwa, John. *Prayer: How Praying Together Shapes the Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018.

- Ortberg, John. *The Life You've Always Wanted*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.
- Packer, J. I. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008.
- Peterson, Eugene H. *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2021.
- Ross, Allen P. *A Commentary on the Psalms: Volume 1, Psalm 1-41*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011.
- Stott, John. *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996.
- Towner, Philip. *1-2 Timothy & Titus*. The IVP New Testament Commentary Series. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994.
- Tozier, A. W. *Worship: The Reason We Were Created*. Chicago: Moody, 2017.
- VanGemeren, Willem A. *Psalms*. In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, *Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 1-880. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991.
- Webster-Merriam, "Disciple," Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed January 20, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disciple>.
- Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Rev. and upd. ed. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014.
- Wilkinson, Bruce. *The Seven Laws of the Learner: How to Teach Almost Anything to Practically Anyone*. Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 1992.
- Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. Colorado Springs: HarperOne, 1999.
- Yancey, Philip. *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.
- Yarborough, Robert W. *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018.
- Yurgelun-Todd, Deborah A., William D. S. Killgore, and Christina B. Cintron. "Cognitive Correlates of Medial Temporal Lobe Development across Adolescence: A Magnetic Resonance Imaging Study." *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 96 (2003): 3-17.

ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING THE EIGHTH GRADE BOYS AT IMMANUEL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL IN SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA, TO UNDERSTAND AND PRACTICE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Dale Wayne Pinkley Jr.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Matthew David Haste

This project seeks to equip the eighth-grade boys at Immanuel Christian School in Springfield, Virginia, to understand and practice spiritual disciplines. Chapter 1 shares the ministry context of ICS and the goals of this project. Chapter 2 provides four biblical passages (Ps 1:1-3; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 1 Tim 4:7-12; Titus 2:1-6) to lay the foundation to show that understanding and developing spiritual disciplines is vital to the spiritual life of young men. Chapter 3 shares how understanding biblical discipleship and educational philosophy is central to a young man's spiritual growth. Chapter 4 explains the project itself, sharing the eight-week curriculum and how it was taught during the fall of the school year. Chapter 5 assesses the success of the project based on the set goals. In the end, this project desires to equip the eighth-grade boys at ICS to understand and develop spiritual disciplines they will use during their life

VITA

Dale Wayne Pinkley Jr.

EDUCATION

BA, Cedarville College, 1999

MACE, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2004

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Assistant Head of School, Immanuel Christian School, Springfield, Virginia,
2011-

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Youth Pastor, Puna Covenant Church, Keaau, Hawaii, 2005-2010