

Spiritual Fitness

We are **encountered by Christ, empowered by the Spirit** – saved, baptized, **sanctified to do the work of the Kingdom of God** which is to preach the gospel, heal the sick, and set the captives free.

1. First step in being “spiritual” is an awareness that you are a spiritual being and to be made alive to the greatest lover of the universe through asking Jesus into your life. This is first and foremost about asking Jesus to be the One who saves you. It is not an intellectual action but a heart experience. It’s not enough to have knowledge or to study the Bible or go to church.

John 5: 39-40

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the scriptures which testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me and have life!

2. The second step is to *be being filled with the Spirit* – over and over yielding to the spirit and according to Romans 8 being led by the Holy Spirit. There is this flow of God through us – leading, speaking, anointing, comforting...

We know deeply that we belong to God through the experience of *being filled with the Spirit*. It’s like a seal or sign in our hearts that we belong to God.

When I was filled with the Spirit – *nothing happened* – but a month later I looked back and I knew something had changed in my relationship with God. It was more personal. Later I spoke in tongues and have gradually grown in my walk with the Holy Spirit.

3. Being spiritual is an ongoing learning to **be led by the Spirit** – our minds controlled by the Spirit rather than our sinful nature which is hostile to God according to Ephesians 2.

To be spiritually minded we need to develop our capacity to hear God and to contain God. I think we need to be in training.

4. Last week we observed how resistant we are to anything spiritual – how hard it is to get up to spend time with God – to pray or to read the Word.

Our flesh and minds are hostile and we also have an enemy who will oppose us. So we need good reasons and God’s help to exercise our spiritual muscles.

Tonight is a call to get in training to develop your spiritual capacity as much as you spend time on your physical and emotional and academic life. Get these in balance.

None of us like the word discipline but this is what it comes down to.

As I said earlier this year, I was walking up Signal Hill and got the impression that God really wants to impress on us that He desires to speak to us.

This is the normal Christian life. To walk in fellowship with God like this.

This is how it was in the beginning and it’s our spiritual inheritance still.

Then I had this scripture in my head: Man does not live by bread alone.
but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Later on I looked it up and found it was also from **Deut 8:**

1 Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors. 2 Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. 3 He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that people do not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. 4 Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. 5 Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.

On reading this God spoke to me about how he disciplines me and trains me.

I had just been in a situation where everything seemed to have gone pear shaped, and I was asking God what he wanted me to learn out of it.

I had the distinct impression that the situation I had faced was a test.

It was a means by which God was teaching me to yield my rights and to learn how to preserve unity in the face of disappointment and frustration.

The hard thing was his tool to train me in a spiritual discipline.

I don't take discipline very well. I haven't had that much of it.

But I wanted to maintain trust and unity, to learn submission and obedience even though it felt bad, and I wanted to be angry and defend myself and get upset.

I realize that discipline is about love. It's about him training me.

It's about being a disciple.

He disciplines me because he loves me, he disciplines me so I will learn to hear him, to hunger for him and cry out for him.

In discipline God is saying I train you by this and I disciple you so you will be mature.

I discipline you until you are able to obey.

I discipline so that you will learn to hear my voice.

You don't just live by physical instincts and bread;
you need to hunger and cry out for a spiritual solution.

I allow pain so you will cry out to me.

Discipline can bring great results and great peace.

Hebrews 12:11

Discipline produces an harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Muscles grow as they are put under pressure and used and proved. Our capacity grows as we stretch and extend ourselves. If we don't exercise our muscles shorten and go flabby. ...the guts of being a disciple – a follower is being trained, disciplined. And this so we are of use to God in the coming of the kingdom.

What do these verses tell us about why we are called to be in spiritual training and discipline?

2 Timothy 3:16

All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Hebrews 12:4-11

Discipline produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

James 1:2-4, 12:13-16

Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters.

Hebrews 5:13

Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

1 Corinthians 9: 24-27

I do not fight like a boxer beating the air or run like someone running aimlessly. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave. Everyone who competes goes into strict training to get the prize – we get a crown that will last forever.

Revelation 5:10

You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

We are disciplined or disciplined to:

1. hear spiritually
2. be obedient.
3. produce righteousness and peace. Hebrews 12: 11
4. be mature and to discern good and evil. Hebrew 5:14
5. be sharers of the Gospel, heal the sick and set the captives free. Mark 6:12-13
6. reign and influence
7. be equipped
8. last the distance

TAKE THE CHALLENGE tonight. Move a step closer to God in one or more of these areas.