

SPIRITUAL: HABITS (BASIC)

LifeGroup LEADER Notes

Matthew 11:28-30

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

"I am not religious, just spiritual" is something you'll frequently hear people saying nowadays. As Christ followers, we can get behind that, because our emphasis is relationship with Jesus. However, being "spiritual" does not mean structureless and free-floating. Spiritual growth in your relationship with God takes **hard work** and **serious effort**. This week we're going to talk about spiritual habits, also known as spiritual disciplines. These are the ways in which we train our spiritual selves to develop and grow as Christians.

Challenge your group this week to analyze their priorities. Do not accept the trite answers, i.e.: "I'm just too busy" or "Nobody has time for that" or "I don't think God wants to bog us down." Let's analyze our priorities, recognize the seriousness of our habits form us, and change the conversation!

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." -2 Timothy 2:15

There is no such thing as a "spiritual" Christian without basic disciplines (i.e.: reading, praying, serving, giving, fellowshiping) because these are the God ordained paths by which we both come to and become like Jesus.

Next Level - Throughout the notes you will see "Next Level." This indicates that it is time to read your group and determine if this is an area your group is ready to dig deeper into together or better suited for personal reflection..

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. As a group, take some time to discuss what makes each of you tick. What hobbies do people love to do? What are people passionate about? E.g.. Biking, Video Games, Horseback riding etc. [This is important! Get to know what your group enjoys to do, and how they spend their time. This is a way to not only build community, and people can find similarities, but also challenge each other in the way we invest our time, money and headspace.]

2. In the graph below take a moment to list areas, hobbies, or items in your life in which you invest much of your time, money, and headspace. Do not try to analyze too much what is “positive” or “negative” -- just be honest. Afterwards share with the group as little or as much as you’re willing.

Time	Money	Headspace

3. On Sunday we met Reverend Hank (yes, Hank is a doggy). Pastor Paul highlighted that, just as getting your medical license or dental credentials, being spiritual takes effort and hard work. You cannot get insta-spiritual insta-fast. There’s no fast food spirituality -- even if a dog can get their ministerial credentials online.
- Look up and read Psalm 119: 6-16 in two different translations.** How does this passage put the graph above--relating to time, money and headspace--into perspective? How would David (the Psalmist and writer of Ps. 119) have filled out the above graph?
 - *Next Level* Look up 1 Timothy 4: 8, Hebrews 12: 1-2, 2 Timothy 2: 15 and compare their content.** How is the discipline necessary for physical training a good metaphor for spiritual training? What ways might it fall short? [Here’s where the metaphor probably falls short. Don’t forget Ephesians 2:8, and the reminder that we are saved by faith through grace. God knows our humanity and recognizes that we will fall short and make mistakes. It is not until after our conversion to Christ and the work of the Spirit in our lives that we *can* embark on this spiritual training. Even when we miss a “training day” or have a bad day God’s grace is enough for us to move forward.]

4. Before diving into Matthew 11, can your group remember the three main verbal commands in Matthew 11:28-30?

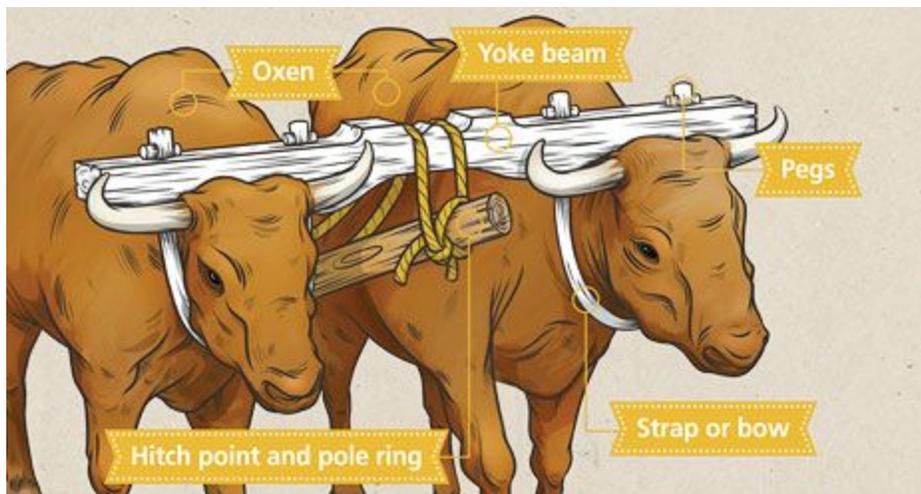
[In Matthew 11:28-30 ESV there are three main verbs/commands/action words upon which everything hangs *Come, take, learn*.

Come! - Is not just a one time invitation to salvation (forgiveness), it’s a daily call. Who does Jesus invite to follow Him? Not the proud (I’ve got this people, arrogant people, or the I don’t need help people) but the weary (I’m tired of the busy, busy, busy but empty, empty, empty rat race of life people, the ‘there’s this monster that I created and now can’t break free from’ people).

Take and learn - Can it be the reason we feel spiritual empty, God is distant, prayers don’t rise higher than the ceiling, is because we keep coming to Jesus but we rarely take from Jesus?]

Read Matthew 11:25-30.

5. In order to be a “spiritual” Christian we need to first and foremost actually become a Christian--a follower of Jesus Christ. This is a simple truth which we often miss, and is beautifully pictured in this passage.
 - a. What kind of people is Jesus inviting to come and know him in the passage?
[Some ideas are... 1 - Those whose faith is as simple as a child. 2 - Those who are weary (those who recognize their sin). 3 - Those who are burdened with religion, striving to earn God’s approval. 4 - Those who want to learn about a gentle, humble, and loving God.]
 - b. Would anyone be willing to share their journey of coming to Jesus, perhaps connecting it to one of the four steps we listed above? [This is an opportunity to share the Gospel with those in your group who might need to hear it again or may not yet be a follower of Jesus. Here is a great resource for sharing the Gospel: [Four Spiritual Laws.](#)]
6. Though we like to think we are free spirits charting our own spiritual journeys, the fact of the matter is that we’re all yoked (aka tied and influenced) by someone and something (usually more than one).
 - a. How does Jesus’ picture of a yoke (see picture below) include both submission and fellowship?



- b. How is a yoke a means of both limitation and empowerment? [It limits by connecting us to Christ and his will, we’re not just free agents, but it empowers us by increasing our capacity to do the work at hand alongside of Jesus.]
7. Read the following quote: *My central claim is that we can become like Christ by doing one thing - following Him in the overall style of life He chose for Himself. . . . What activities did Jesus practice? Such things as solitude and silence, prayer, simple and*

*sacrificial living, intense study and meditation upon God's Word and God's ways, and service to others.*⁸

- a. What is the connection between being yoked with Jesus and spiritual disciplines? [Spiritual disciplines structure our life and are a heavy load to bear at times, but they empower us to live powerful and free spiritual lives with Jesus.]
 - b. Create your own working definition of a spiritual discipline. [There are God given places and paths where we encounter the spiritual presence and power of God. When God invites us to *come, take and learn* it's because he's already provided the way, places and paths.]
8. Make a working list the spiritual disciplines (habits) that Christians have found to be helpful means of transformation and empowerment. [You might want to divide people up in groups of 2-3 and make it a timed friendly competition.]
- a. Refer back to the quote above. Which spiritual disciplines might Dallas Willard have missed?
 - b. Two foundational disciplines in *every* Christian's life are spending time in the Word (the Bible) and in prayer. Referring back to your time and headspace chart from earlier, how do these fit in with your other activities? Which activities compete the most with the role of Word and prayer in your life?
 - c. ***Next Level*** Reflect and categorize each of the disciplines and their role in your life personally. Choose one from the "not a part of my life" category and share with the group.

Comes naturally	Working on it	Not a part of my life

PRAYER

Read James 4:8.

[If you can stay together as a large group, that's great! However, depending on size, or people's comfort levels with praying out loud, break into small groups. Perhaps breaking up into men and women would be helpful but it's going to be different for each group.]

⁸ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (San Francisco: Harper, 1988) pg. ix.

This week we will pray for everyone! Here's how...

- Pray for the person on your right and go around in a circle.
- Pray specifically that during the weariness of the week they would come to Jesus and take His yoke of spiritual disciples.
- Pray for a meaningful time in God's word and through prayer.

[Remember James 4:8. When we draw near to God, he draws near to us. Use this time to build excitement, that this week through being in God's Word and in prayer, that not only can we draw near to God, but He will be near to us.]