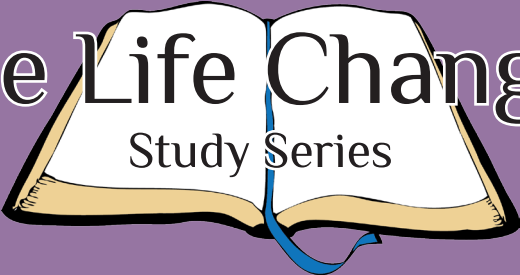


The Life Changer

Study Series



Growing in Christ: Spiritual Disciplines

In our last lesson we looked at prayer and Bible study as spiritual disciplines that help us stay connected to the Vine Jesus Christ. We are the branches and it is in spiritual union with Christ through the Holy Spirit that we have the fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. We mentioned other spiritual disciplines that help us to grow in Christ. Among them are sharing our faith with others, fellowship with other believers and corporate worship. There is also fasting and the singing of hymns and spiritual songs. While we want to do what the Bible tells us, we want to do them for the right reasons. The spiritual disciplines are not simply religious requirements. These things are to foster spiritual union with Christ. Spiritual union with Christ produces a life that is more like Christ's life. In this lesson we will look at what the Bible says about other spiritual disciplines besides prayer and Bible study.



Lesson 9



Shining Stars Series (Philippians 2:14-16)



"Why don't we sing in our worship?" Afife asked with a sincere look on her face.

"Because it's disrespectful, that's why" her husband Reşat quipped with a little impatience.

"What is disrespectful about music and who says it is disrespectful to God?" Afife shot back. "I like it and I think it is a wonderful way to worship God. Look, it says right here in the Bible, "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.""

Reşat wasn't pleased with the challenge to his authority and said, "That is singing to one-another, not to God in public worship."

Fatma wanted to break the tension that was growing in the voices of the couple. It was Fatma's home after all and being a little older and Reşat's cousin, she could help calm things down and she said, "The angels sing in front of God don't they? It seems I remember reading something like that."

*Mehmet raised his eyebrows at the remark and began thumbing through the Bible. At last his eye settled on a place where it said, "They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested." "*²

Mehmet continued, "But that isn't the angels singing the song, those

¹ Ephesians 5:19-20.

² Revelation 15:3-4.

are the ones who are faithful at the very end of time just before Jesus comes. We haven't studied that together; I read ahead. But they are singing to God directly. Let me see if I can find a place where the angels sing." Mehmet dived into his Bible again and he became quiet as he searched.

Then Türkan, Fatma's mother, interjected into the silence, "I think the Old Testament had a lot of singing and instruments for worship. Weren't all the Psalms the worship hymns of the Old Testament?"

Mehmet nodded affirmatively without lifting his eyes from the Bible in front of him. Then he said, "Look also at 2 Chronicles 29:28-30."

Mehmet waited until he heard the last of the rustling pages being turned in everyone's Bible. Then he read, "So all the assembly worshiped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. And when they had finished offering, the king and all who were present with him bowed and worshiped. Moreover King Hezekiah and the leaders commanded the Levites to sing praise to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped."

Mehmet said, "It seems pretty clear that in the Bible we can worship with music and instruments and singing. It happens here on earth and in heaven." Mehmet avoided eye-contact with Reşat because he didn't want to seem like he was lecturing him in particular, just teaching in general.

But Reşat was still on the defensive when he said, "Look, I still think it is disrespectful. Worship should be quiet. You should be quiet in front of God just like you are quiet in front of your elders."

Fatma looked at Mehmet and Mehmet looked at Fatma. Fatma said, "Reşat does have a point. The Bible says somewhere, "But the LORD

*is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him."*³

After cut back into the conversation, "It seems that there is a place for music and instruments and singing before the Lord and also a time to keep silent."

She put her arm under her husband's arm to reassure him of her respect for him and to acknowledge that he had made a good point. She continued, "There must be reverence at all times before God even when we are making music and singing to Him. Not any kind of music is appropriate. It isn't a nightclub, it is worship. And there has to be prayer in worship time and that requires silence." (To be Continued)

Music is one of the spiritual disciplines that adds joy and comfort to our lives and to the lives of others. We read above, "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Music, perhaps more than any other man-made thing, has power to move the emotions and inspire devotion. Because it is so powerful, we also need to be careful with how it is used. It can be a power for good or for evil and can create controversy as we read above. It must be used appropriately.

① Q1. How do we understand what is appropriate and inappropriate? Read Philippians 1:9, 10; and 1 Corinthians 12:7-12.

A. _____

Spiritual discernment is a gift that is exercised in the church. Discernment is necessary when practicing the spiritual discipline of music both in private and public.

② Q2. What spiritual discipline can help us to know and understand the Lord's will? Read Acts 13:2, 3.

3 Habakkuk 2:20.

A. _____

Another spiritual discipline is fasting. The church at Antioch fasted because they wanted to cooperate with the Lord by understanding His will. They wanted to be in harmony with each other in their decisions and actions. God does not give one person a knowledge of His will and leave the rest of the church uninformed. The discipline of fasting can help free our bodies of the work of digestion and allow us to focus on understanding God's will.

③ Q3. What kind of fast did Daniel do? How long did it last? Read Daniel 10:2, 3.

A. _____

Daniel was mourning over some unfortunate event and was seeking God's blessing with fasting and prayer. The three weeks he selected was of his own choosing. He did not abstain from food completely but ate only the simplest items. He wanted to maintain health and still have a clear mind to understand the Lord's will. There is no prescribed fast for the followers of Jesus. We do it as a spiritual discipline for seeking the Lord's will and for times of intense prayer. In the sanctuary system in the Old Testament there was a fast day on the Day of Atonement. It is mentioned in Leviticus 16:29 and Acts 27:9. When Christ died, the sanctuary ritual system that pointed to Christ's sacrifice came to an end. The Bible does not prescribe any other time or any length of time or style for fasting.

When might be a good time to fast and pray to learn the Lord's will? Certainly one of the most serious decisions we can make is when we choose a spouse. We cannot see the future. We do not know what our spouse will be like 10 years from now. But God can see the future. When making a decision about marriage we can seek affirmation from the Lord that our spouse is the one that God has chosen for us. What about careers and job changes? Are those subjects of fasting and prayer? Certainly. When we are seeking God's healing of someone who has

a serious illness, fasting and prayer are appropriate. As the church of Antioch sought the Lord by fasting to discern His will for the progress of spreading the gospel, so to can the church in modern times use the spiritual discipline of fasting to this end.

- ① Q4. What does the Bible say about meeting for private and corporate worship? Read Leviticus 23:3; Hebrews 10:23-25; Acts 2:42, 46; Luke 22:19 and 1 Corinthians 11:26.

A. _____

Both private and corporate worship are necessary for spiritual health and are spiritual disciplines. This certainly includes meeting to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Some may think that they can foster their spiritual growth in isolation from the group. This has proven time and time again to produce unfavorable results. God created people as social beings. God himself is love and love requires an object other than itself for expression. Therefore we see that in society with other believers spiritual growth reaches its highest potential. Among the believers we learn to serve and share. We also learn to receive instruction and correction. We are a family.

- ① Q5. What else were the first believers doing that was attended with spiritual power? Read Acts 4:33 and 5:42.

A. _____

The first believers were sharing with excitement the truths of the gospel. They proclaimed that salvation in Jesus Christ had been established and all could have assurance of eternal life through faith in Him. They were giving their testimony spontaneously as a result. Giving our personal testimony is giving witness to Jesus Christ in a most powerful way. Witnessing is a spiritual discipline that fosters our spiritual vitality.

- ① Q6. What did Jesus instruct a new believer to do? Read Mark 5:18-20.

A. _____

Christianity is an experience where the Holy Spirit brings Christ into your being and you are molded and influenced by this divine power. It changes your life. When you have this experience you can testify to it. A person cannot testify to an experience they have never had. If they have not had an experience with Christ then they can only talk about Christianity as one philosophy opposed to any other. There is no power to convict people of the truth by simply rehearsing a different set of doctrines. What the world needs to see is the evidence of the power of Christ to transform lives. It needs to see the miracle of God's people relating in love without prejudice.

Ellen White wrote the following:

We all have an important work to do for God, and we should watch for opportunities of presenting Jesus to those who know Him not. And opportunities will not be lacking if we are prepared by the grace of Christ to be workers together with God. Your example in living for Christ, in showing that you have the mind of Christ, will be far more impressive than any words you may utter, any profession you may make. (Signs of the Times October 12, 1891 paragraph 4.)

⑦ Q7. What did Paul say when he had opportunity to speak to his countrymen? Read Acts 22:2-21.

A. _____

Paul gave his personal conversion experience as a testimony to the people.

⑦ Q8. What did John do? Read 1 John 1:1-3.

A. _____

⑦ Q9. Besides personal testimony, what else is involved in the spiritual

discipline of witnessing? Read 1 Peter 3:15; Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 18:27, 28.

A. _____

Believers share the faith they have according to the Scriptures and teach others what the Scriptures say. This is not only a command of Christ but it is also good for spiritual health. A person who receives truth and doesn't share it is like the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea receives water but has no outlet, so there is no flowing water. Salt levels are very high and there is no life in the Dead Sea. To maintain spiritual health there must be grace flowing into the believer from Christ through the Holy Spirit and blessings flowing out from the believer to humanity.

Q10. In what other ways are witnessing described in the Bible?
Read 1 Peter 2:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:15-20.

A. _____

The witnessing the believers do is compared to the ministry of a priesthood. Sometimes this is called the "priesthood of all believers." By sharing the virtues of God with others they are ministering to them. The apostle Paul described this as a ministry of reconciliation. Just as we were reconciled to God through Christ, we share that event with others. God did not reconcile with us only, but in Christ He reconciled with the whole world. As believers we become ministers of that reconciliation, to share with others the good news.

Q11. What did the first believers do as a part of their faith? Read Acts 2:46; Romans 12:10-13 and 1 Peter 4:9.

A. _____

Hospitality provides fellowship with other believers and opens the way to share our faith with others. Thus hospitality is one of the spiritual disciplines that helps us stay connected to the Vine Jesus Christ.



Shining Stars Series (Philippians 2:14-16)



Afife wanted to share with the group what she had discovered in her personal reading of the Bible in the previous week and she said, "Can I share something with you all? Look here in Acts 16:25. It says, 'But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.' Paul and Silas had been whipped and thrown in jail. How can there be joy in your soul under those kind of circumstances? And yet they were praying and singing hymns to God. They were not doing those things out of a ritual requirement of their religion. Praying and singing to God was just a natural part of their life. And what a testimony to the other prisoners that must have been! Paul and Silas had hope!"

"I want that kind of hope. I want that kind of religion. The singing we do, the praying we do keeps us connected to Christ by faith. He is the vine and we are the branches. We receive life from Him. It's really like a circle. We stay connected to Christ by doing those things, but the Spirit in turn puts the desire in our hearts to do those things. If the Spirit didn't do that, how could Paul and Silas pray and sing under such miserable circumstances?"

Reşat looked at his wife thoughtfully. He couldn't help but admire her insights into spiritual things. Yet he was a little embarrassed because she seemed to be ahead of him in biblical knowledge and experience. Her face was beaming as she was speaking. He kept silent and hid his thoughts in his heart.

❓ Q12. What other instruction do we get from the Bible about growing in Christ? Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16 and 2 Peter 3:18.

A. _____

In Christ we have joy and we advance in grace and in knowing Christ. It is a spiritual discipline to focus on rejoicing in Christ instead of focusing

on the evil around us. Furthermore, we cooperate with God to advance in grace and in knowing Christ. To do this we must focus on spiritual things instead of worldly things.

① Q13. Would you like to have this joy and grace and knowledge? If so, based on this lesson, what positive changes can you make in your life to make those desires a reality?

A. _____

Music and singing, fasting, personal and public worship including the Lord's supper, witnessing to others by sharing our personal testimony and teaching, hospitality and focusing on being glad and knowing Christ are spiritual disciplines that help us stay connected to Christ. If we are in Christ, we will grow in Christ.

Call to commitment through prayer.



EN ZENGİN MAĞARA ADAMI

Milyoner bir baba ile gösteri dünyasında çalışan bir annenin oğulları olan genç Doug Batchelor, paranın satın alabileceği her şeye sahipti. Mutluluk hariç her şeye. Uyuşturucu kullandı, okulda kavgalar çıkardı ve intihar düşüncesiyle hayaller kurdu. Kendinden tiksinen ve hayatın hiçbir amacı olmadığına inanan Doug, yaşayabileceği tüm eğlence ve heyecanları yaşamayı kafasına koydu.

Arayışı sona ermeden önce dağlarda bulunan bir mağara, evi oldu. Babasının sahip olduğu yata, jete ve havayolu firmasına rağmen, Doug kendini çöp tenekelerinde yiyecek ararken buldu.

Doug'un aradığı mutluluk sürekli kendisinden kaçıyor, ta ki bir "arayışçı" dostun mağarasında bıraktığı tozlu bir kitabı bulup okuyana dek. Bundan sonra olanlar ancak mucize olarak açıklanabilir.

BİNLERCESİ KIRILACAK

Franz Hasel, 40 yaşındaki bir pasifist, ön cephelerde köprüler kuran Hitler'in seçkin birliği 699. İstihkâm Bölüğüne atanmıştı. Dinî inancı üstleri tarafından pek hoş karşılanmamıştı. Kendisiyle "havuç yiyen" ve "İncil okuyan" diye alay edilmesine rağmen sonunda birliğinin saygısını kazanmıştı.

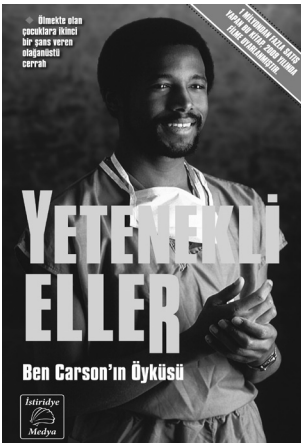
Çevrelerindeki binlerce insan savaşın dehşetine kurban giderken onlar meleklerin kanatları altındaydılar, hatta bazen gerçek anlamda. Bu, ne pahasına olursa olsun imanlı kalmayı seçen ve yüce Tanrı'nın gölgesinde sığınmak bulan çaresiz bir ailenin yürek parçalayan gerçek öyküsüdür.



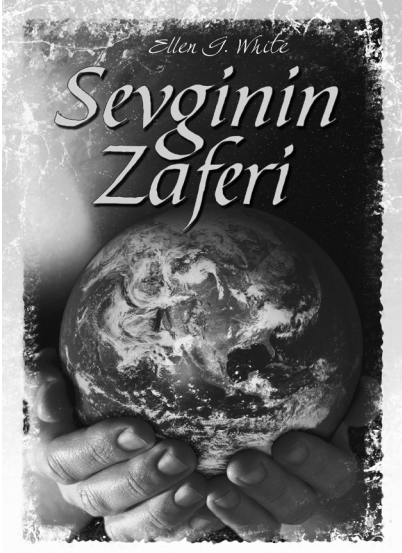
YETENEKLİ ELLER

Dr. Ben Carson, beyin cerrahisindeki umut olmayan yere umut getiren yeniliklerle tüm dünyada tanınmaktadır. Yetenekli Eller'de, Detroit'in kenar mahallelerindeki çocukluğundan başlayarak, otuz üç yaşında Johns Hopkins Sağlık Kurumları'nda pediatrik beyin cerrahisi şefliğine uzanan ilham verici macerası anlatılıyor. Sizi, sayısız hayat kurtardığı ameliyathaneye götüren Ben Carson, görünürde imkânsız olanı başarmaya çalışan herkese örnek oluyor.

Etkileyici vaka tarihçeleriyle dolu olan bu çoksatır kitap, Ben Carson'un zorlukların üstesinden gelme çabasının ve onu günümüzün en büyük hayat kurtarıcılarının biri yapan iman ile dehanın dramatik ve ayrıntılı öyküsünü anlatıyor.



SEVGİNİN ZAFERİ



Kötülüğün kaynağı, henüz çözülememiş bir sırdır. Neden kötülük var? Nereden geliyor? Kötülüğün bir sonu olacak mı? Bunlar yanıtlanması gereken çok önemli sorulardır.

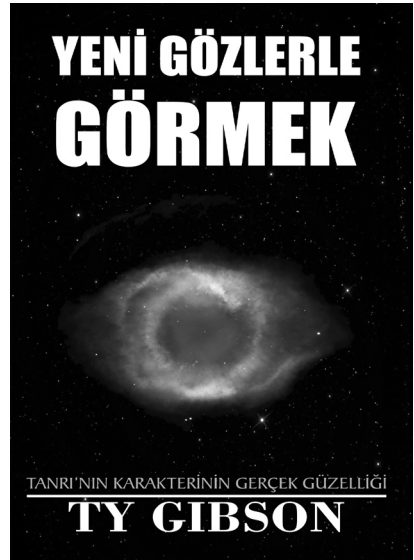
Büyük mücadele, görünen dünyayı, görünmeyen dünyadan ayıran perdeyi aralamakta ve bu dünyanın tüm sakinlerinin dahil olduğu doğüstü savaşı gözler önüne ermektedir.

Kitap, uğrunda savaştıkları şey için çok önemli olan iki tarafın, iyinin ve kötünün arasında geçen evrensel savaşın nasıl başladığından ve nasıl sonlandırılacağından bahsetmektedir. Geçmişten, şimdiki zamandan ve gelecekte söz etmekte, çok dokunaklı bir ricayla ve ciddi bir uyarıyla sona ermektedir. Bu kitabı okurken, sanki Tanrı ile röportaj yapıyormuş hissine kapılacaksınız.

Güzel olduğu kadar şok edici bir yolculuğa çıkmaya hazırlanın. Okuduktan sonra artık aynı kişi olmayacaksınız.

YENİ GÖZLERLE GÖRMEK

Pek çok şeyi görebilmek için, kişinin gözleri açık olmalıdır. Fakat Allah ile öyle değil. Gözlerinizi çok fazla açarsanız ya da çok fazla yakından bakarsanız, O'nu gördüğünüzü düşünürken aslında O'nu gözden kaçırabilirsiniz. Pek çoğumuz tam da bu hatayı yaparız. Allah'ı görmeyi umarak insanlara bakarız. Dinlere bakarız. Hatta aynaya bakarız. Kaçınılmaz olarak da hayal kırıklığına uğrarız, zira İlahî Kişi'nin daha güzel bir resmini ummuştuk. Sayısız insan Allah'tan dönmüştür, çünkü O'nu bir kişide ya da bir toplulukta gördüklerini sanmışlardır... ve açıkçası gördüklerinden hoşlanmamışlardır. Elinizde tuttuğunuz kitap Allah hakkındadır.





Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:1-5)



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