

## THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES PART 3 – THE PRACTICE OF STUDY

### Discuss this:

“There is a strong bias in various Christian traditions against a rational approach to spiritual issues”

- Was a rational approach to Christianity encouraged in your spiritual upbringing? Discouraged?

### Discuss this:

Why is there so much confusion, everywhere, on the spiritual life?

- A. *The god of this age has **blinded the minds** of unbelievers* 2 Corinthians 4:4
- B. *See to it that no one takes you **captive** through hollow and deceptive philosophy* Colossians 2:8
- C. *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the **schemes** of the devil* Ephesians 6: 11
- D. *...In order that Satan might not **outwit** us. For we are not unaware of his **schemes**.* 2 Corinthians 2:11

### Discuss this:

Why does Satan use ideas as his main method of attack against us?

Dallas Willard said, “We truly live at the mercy of our ideas; this is never more true than with our ideas about God.”

*“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Luke 23:34.*

### Discuss this:

Is religious zeal and devotion a good thing?

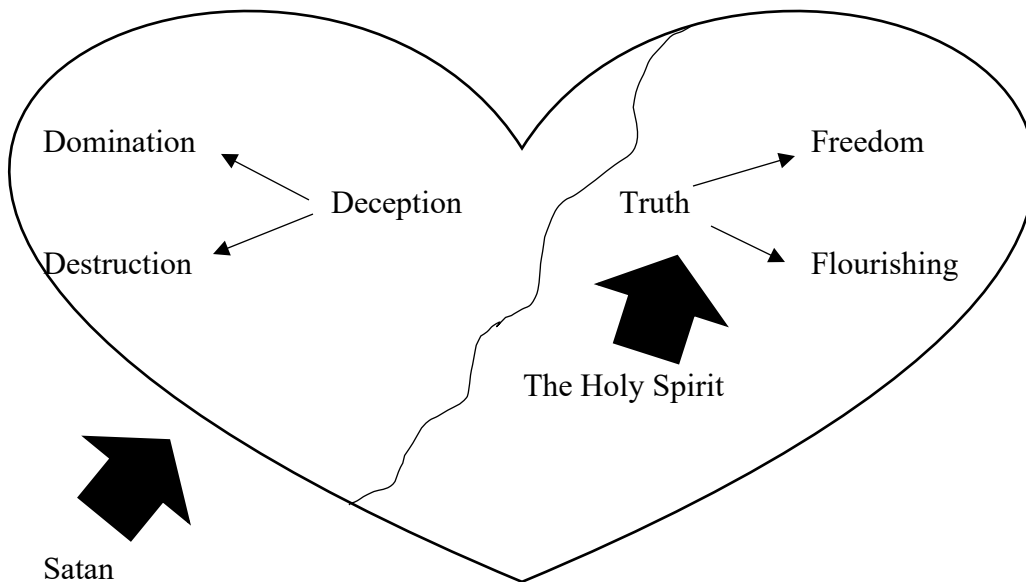
[Paul talking about the Jewish people how rejected Christ]...*For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is **not based on knowledge**.* Romans 10:2

### Discuss this:

What is **the Great Lie**?

**Discuss this:**

THE HUMAN HEART



*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10*

*When he lies, [Satan] speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.... He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him.... Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. John 8*

- How does sin lead to domination?
- How does sin lead to destruction?

**Discuss this:**

Why is evil so persistent, so hard to eradicate? Why are we so often falling for the same old tricks?

*[The apple looked] ...Good for food, and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom. Gen 3:6.*

*"Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light." 2 Corinthians 11:14.*

**Discuss this:**

We are constantly inundated with a way of thinking that is, in fact, false.

**Discuss this:**

How could people possibly think that things like slavery or the mistreatment of women are acceptable?

**Discuss this:**

“We are blind to our own blind spots.”

**Discuss this:**

Are the people of God immune from Satanic deception?

*My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Hosea 4:6*

*“How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Luke 24:25*

**Discuss this:**

In what way did Jesus “fight fire with fire?”

**Discuss this:**

What are the weapons with which Paul battled the powers of darkness?

- A. *You foolish Galatians (3:1)! Who has bewitched you? **Understand**, then...and he goes on from there.*
- B. *“Do not be children in your **thinking**; be babes in evil, but in **thinking** be mature” I Corinthians 14:20*
- C. *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of **teaching** and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful **scheming**. Ephesians 4:14*
- D. *We continually ask God to fill you with the **knowledge** of his will through all the **wisdom** and **understanding** that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, **growing in the knowledge of God**. Colossians 1:9-10*
- E. *For though we live in the World, we do not wage war as the World does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the World. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish **arguments** and every **pretension** that sets itself up*

against the **knowledge** of God, and we take captive every **thought** to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

**Discuss this:**

How can we become able to discern God's will?

*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**Discuss this:**

What are the two different ways that we need to study?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

**Discuss this:**

On studying diligently:

*Paul taught from morning till evening, explaining about **the kingdom of God**, Acts 28:23*

*For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed **the kingdom of God** and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**Discuss this:**

On studying humbly:

*[Paul's] letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. 2 Peter 3:16*

How can that be?

The Bible as a mirror vs the Bible as a telescope. What makes the difference?

*You will do well to pay attention to Scripture, as to a light shining in a dark place. 2 Peter 1:19*

*Do not be wise in your own eyes, reads Proverbs 3:7.*

**Discuss this:**

Does study, and a genuine knowledge of the truth lead someone to arrogance, or to humility?

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(END OF AUDIO SEGMENT ONE)

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(START OF AUDIO SEGMENT TWO)

**Discuss this:**

What is faith?

*James (2:21-22) elsewhere puts it this way: Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he **did** when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he **did**.*

*I will show you my faith by my deeds James says. Faith without works is dead.*

**Discuss this:**

What is the relationship between faith and knowledge?

*Make every effort to add to your faith...knowledge says Peter. 2 Peter 1:6*

“Knowledge involves the mind; faith involves the will.”

**Discuss this:**

What are two different possible reasons that we might fail to do what is right?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

What can be done about a lack of knowledge?

What can be done about a lack of faith?

**Discuss this:**

How does obedience lead to knowledge?

*“**If** you hold to my teaching, [**then**] you are really my disciples. **Then** you will know the truth, and [**then**] the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31)*

The spiritual progression:

1. Study
2. Obedience
3. Truth
4. Freedom.

**Discuss this:**

A. Sin darkens, it blinds us.

- a. *Seeking to become wise, they became fools. Romans (chapter 1)*

B. Goodness and obedience enlighten.

- a. *The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. Psalm 19:8*

**Discuss this:**

Can we blame all of our wrong-headedness on the Devil?

*2 Thessalonians 2:10 "...wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."*

Why do people refuse to love the truth?

*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God. John 3:19-21*

**Discuss this:**

What happens to us, the longer we stay in the darkness?

*Their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools. Romans 1:21*

How does this rejection of the truth lead us into evil actions?

*So, God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done (verse 28).*

**Discuss this:**

“Learning to see more clearly is not simply an intellectual exercise. Study alone is not sufficient to come to know God.”

**Discuss this:**

What is the difference between having faith in Christ and having the faith of Christ?

*[In Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2: 3.*

**Discuss this:**

What is the highest and best thing you could ever hope to achieve?

*Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:3*

Knowing God, more than anything else, is what you need to be happy and free.

**Discuss this:**

How can we come to know God?

**Discuss this:**

What is it like once we follow Jesus, and come into the truth, where we see the world where as it actually is?

What are two notable particular areas that will be impacted?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Why is being in an intimate community of some sort is absolutely crucial for spiritual growth?

C. S. Lewis wrote, “When a man is getting better, he understands more and more clearly the evil that is still in him. When a man is getting worse, he understands his own badness less and less”

2. \_\_\_\_\_

“When you come to know the truth, you will come to know that the sinful things you are desiring, that are tempting you, are like eating pig slop” Dallas Willard (paraphrase)

*Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. John 17:17*