

LESSON 3

How Do I Grow in My Relationship with Jesus? (How to Start a Spiritual Discipline)

Lesson Objective:

To know what a spiritual discipline is and joyfully practice a new spiritual habit.

Prayer as You Prepare:

Lord, I realize that being disciplined brings my heart joy and freedom. Help me model this truth to my students. Give them joy through discipline. Teach them discipline in a way that they can rejoice in it, practice it and draw closer in their relationship with You. Amen.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Begin the Journey:

This lesson introduces the concept of spiritual disciplines, the key foundation in Children's 201. Spiritual disciplines can be exciting and fun. It makes us free! Here is an example of this: Have you ever been talking to someone and wanted to recall a specific Bible verse to encourage them? But, you cannot think of the Scripture reference or even remember exactly what the verse says? You can be "freed" from embarrassment or fear if you have disciplined yourself in Scripture memorization. If your students can grasp this value early on in life and make having spiritual discipline a priority, they will be blessed and grow in their faith. Reflect where you as a leader are with spiritual disciplines. After all, we can only take our students as far as we have gone or are willing to go.

ACTIVITY PAGE: YOU HAVE GOT TO START SOMEWHERE

This handout is a challenging maze, illustrating what it might be like to start and stay committed to a spiritual discipline. Sometimes, the most difficult part of a spiritual discipline is just getting started! Ask your students if the maze was easy or difficult. How is this like following through on one of the spiritual disciplines? Encourage your students to start somewhere and God will help them work through the challenges as they come.

On the other side of this handout are the five Quiet Time Check-in review questions for Luke 2:1-3:38.

Did You Know?

Most students play sports or have seen the Olympics. It is only with practice that we can improve. It is the same with our spiritual life. To get to know God, we have to be disciplined enough to make the spiritual disciplines a priority.

OBJECT LESSON: OLYMPIC ATHLETE'S TRAINING SCHEDULE

It takes time, effort, sacrifice and focus to achieve self-discipline. It takes Olympic athletes serious self-discipline in order to train and prepare their bodies to do what people think would be impossible—win gold medals in the Olympic Games. Show your students the daily and long-term training schedules that you have in your classroom. What things do you think the athlete had to sacrifice in order to be disciplined and successful? What must we sacrifice in order to be more self-disciplined in our time with God? What are things you would be willing to sacrifice? What are things you do not want to sacrifice? To be disciplined and grow, you must be willing to train and to make some sacrifices along the way!

Seek the Treasure:

“. . . Train yourselves to be godly.” (1 Timothy 4:7b)

Uncover the Truth:

Have your students share where they are in their spiritual journey and where they would like to be. We all need spiritual goals to strive for. This is a great time for you as a leader to be authentic. What has helped you in your spiritual life? What discipline has been a struggle? How have you been blessed when you are disciplined? How have you made growing in Christ a priority in your life?

- What would “training to be godly” look like?
Answers will vary. Training to be godly might look like reading your Bible every day to gain wisdom and become more like Christ, spending time with other Christians in order to build up your relationship with God or setting aside a specific time each day to just talk with and spend time with God.
- How can you learn to enjoy disciplining yourself?
Answers will vary. According to Hebrews 12:11, discipline is difficult; however, for those that persist amidst the difficulties, they will reap the reward. You can learn to enjoy yourself by thinking about the ultimate long-term reward over the present short-term difficulty.
- If you had to compare the discipline in your life to a race, which one would you be?
Answer will vary. Ensure that your students understand the different race analogies as compared to discipline in their lives.
- Check the one you would most like to develop.
Answers will vary. Remind your students that these are some examples of spiritual disciplines, not a comprehensive list.
- What do you hope this discipline will produce in you one day?
Answers will vary. Ultimately, each discipline will draw us closer and grow us up in our relationship with Jesus. It can only strengthen our relationship with Him and help us be better people towards others.

Find the Purpose:

Encourage your students to start somewhere with a new spiritual habit. Be practical, but be disciplined.

- What is something you do that requires discipline?
Answers will vary. Some examples are going to and practicing karate, reading every day for school or even resisting the urge to fight with siblings.
- 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 makes it clear there is a difference between an actual race like in the Olympics and what Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians. What are the differences?
Answers will vary. In an Olympic Race, everyone competes with ultimately only one final winner, the prize does not last eternally, those who run races on Earth only beat the air and run aimlessly and they must be physically fit to an extreme level in their particular discipline. In the 1 Corinthians Race, we run to win the prize, the prize is eternal and the race is run in order to bring other people to Christ.

GAME: GO FOR THE GOLD!

Objective—To show students that discipline is a process that takes time and effort, not an immediate or easy accomplishment.

Materials—Individual relay tasks and gold medals

Instructions—Divide your small group into two even teams. Each team will compete to win the relay and receive the gold medal; however, this relay will help your students realize that spiritual disciplines take time, discipline, focus and perseverance. They must rely on their teammates in order to successfully compete and be awarded the gold medal!

There are six tasks that must be completed in order. The tasks are as follows:

1. **SILENCE**—be completely silent for 30 seconds. If at any time they make a noise, restart the time.
2. **PHYSICAL**—do 15 Jumping Jacks.
3. **SKILL**—make a paper airplane and fly it all the way across the classroom.
4. **MEMORIZATION**—recite last week’s memory verse without looking it up.
5. **MUSICAL**—sing “Jesus Loves Me.”
6. **MENTAL**—answer this question: *What must you sacrifice in order to be disciplined?*

Give each team the next relay task after the first objective is complete. Do this until the final student has answered the final question. The team that has all of their team members complete each task will win the gold medals! You may take your class outside or to the hallway to complete the relay if you would like.

NOTE:

- You may need to play through two times in case some students get confused or do not know how to do their task (i.e. cannot make a paper airplane or do not know the words to "Jesus Loves Me").

Discussion

1. Why is it difficult to be disciplined?
2. Are the outcomes of having discipline in your life always good?
3. Besides the spiritual disciplines, what other area in your life can you or would you like to develop more discipline?

FOLLOW-UP:

Make sure you as a leader are doing the "Explore The Possibilities at HOME." Your students learn most from your life and example. Ask your students how they are doing with "Explore the Possibilities at HOME." Share your struggles and triumphs in this discipline.