



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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(Acts 2:46, 47)

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any people feel cut off from God. Many would like to know Him more intimately. The process of growing intimacy with God begins by knowing that spiritual transformation is the work of God. He alone can change the human heart, regenerate the soul, and ignite spiritual passions. By contrast, the spiritual disciplines are activities believers do in order to draw ever closer to God. These disciplines are the practical expressions of our longings for God (Ps. 42:1, 2).

In Richard Foster's classic work, *Celebration of Discipline*, he cautions that spiritual disciplines are an inward and spiritual reality. The inner attitude of the heart, writes Foster, "is far more crucial than the mechanics for coming into the reality of the spiritual life."

The connection between the concepts of discipline and discipleship is more than a linguistic similarity. Disciples are disciplined "learners" whose lives are being conformed to the life of the Master Himself. When we look at the commands Jesus gave His disciples, we see them falling into basic categories: (1) Love God; (2) deny self; (3) love others; (4) trust His Word.

These characteristics build on each other. We can't love others until we have learned to deny ourselves. We won't have a supreme devotion to God's Word until we have a supreme love for God Himself. In one of our Lord's most convicting challenges, He warned, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

PUTTING GOD FIRST

In Luke 14:25-33, Jesus gave three conditions for Christian discipleship. He claimed authority over our relationships, our rights, and our riches. In each case, Jesus said one "cannot be My disciple" if he or she refuses these commands. In so doing, He reminds

us of the seriousness of Christian discipleship. The earliest believers were called "disciples" long before they were called "Christians" (Acts 11:26). They received the latter designation only after they succeeded in emulating the life and character of Christ to the point that others called them Christians.

In relation to the priorities of the Christian life, Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). This is the direct contrast to the selfishness of most human beings. Even in Christian circles, a lot of selfish behavior passes as spirituality when it is not spiritual at all. Superficial piety can never replace the genuine desire to be like Christ. God and God alone must produce that desire in our lives.

FOCUSING ON THE THINGS OF GOD

One cannot read the Bible without observing the attention that is given to the spiritual disciplines of *prayer* (Mark 1:35), *fasting* (Acts 13:3), *meditation* (Psalm 1:2) and *study* (Phil. 4:8). Each of these is designed by God to draw us into personal communion with Him. They are the spiritual avenues of His grace by which He transforms our lives and makes us into what He created us to be—His dear children.

If the original disciples had to ask "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1), then how much more do we? Prayer, like all the

spiritual disciplines, is an automatic response of God's work in the depth of our souls. But it is also a discipline that must be learned and practiced. Jesus' own disciples fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane when they should have been praying. "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:40, 41).

Jesus expected His disciples to pray and was disappointed when they didn't. He expected believers to fast, but chided them when they did it for the wrong reasons (Matt. 6:16-18). He condemned the scribes and Pharisees for not knowing the scriptures (Matt. 19:4) and urged His disciples to study the scriptures, for they spoke of Him (Luke 24:44-49).

DEVELOPING A HEART FOR GOD

The spiritual disciplines help us focus on the things of God so that we might truly worship Him. Worship is our human response to the love of God, the expression of the heart set free by His grace. Worship is the highest expression of the human soul. It draws us into the presence of God and captures our hearts and minds for Him.

Jesus said, "You shall worship the LORD your God" (Matt. 4:10). He also said, "Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). Worship always precedes service. It is the holy expectancy that propels us to serve God with all our strength. We can give Him our lives only when we have truly given Him our hearts. Obedience flows from submission, which is expressed in worship.

God must get us on our knees before He can get us on our feet. Attempts to serve without worship will result in the futility of self-effort. Such vain attempts will defeat God's work in our lives rather than

enhance it. He does not need us to defend Him. He can do that Himself! But He wants us to worship Him and love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. For then, and only then, will we be ready to serve Him effectively.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of spiritual disciplines include:

- > 1 Samuel 16:7
- > Psalm 104:34
- > Matthew 6:16-18
- > Romans 12:1, 2
- > 1 Corinthians 9:26, 27
- > 2 Corinthians 10:3-6
- > Ephesians 4:20-24
- > Colossians 3:16, 17
- > 1 Timothy 4:7-11
- > Hebrews 10:24, 25

To Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on spiritual disciplines at Daniel 10:12 on page 1121. See also the personality profile of the early Christians on page 1419.

words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.

¹²Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. ¹³But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. ¹⁴Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come."

¹⁵When he had spoken such words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. ¹⁶And suddenly, one having the likeness of the sons^a of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to him who stood before me, "My lord, because of the vision my sorrows have overwhelmed me, and I have retained no strength. ¹⁷For how can this servant of my lord talk with you, my lord? As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me."

¹⁸Then again, the one having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me.

¹⁹And he said, "O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!"

So when he spoke to me I was strengthened, and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me."

²⁰Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come. ²¹But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince.

11 "Also in the first year of Darius the Mede, I, even I, stood up to confirm and strengthen him.) ²And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece. ³Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. ⁴And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these.

10:16 ^aTheodotion and Vulgate read *the son*; Septuagint reads *a hand*.

KEY PASSAGE



Spiritual Disciplines

SECOND NATURE

(10:12)

Is a spiritual discipline—such as prayer—worth the effort? The vision the Lord gave Daniel by the Tigris River answers that question. The man in the vision told Daniel, "Your words were heard; and I have come because of your words."

Spiritual disciplines are personal habits that create a focus on God. These habits help believers in their spiritual walk and spiritual growth. Disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, fasting, worship, and meditation on Scripture aid believers to deepen their relationship with God. Believers discipline themselves to strengthen their faith much as athletes discipline themselves to strengthen their muscles. These disciplines are done not to gain salvation, but out of love for Christ and a desire to be like Him. Athletes stretch various muscles and practice key skills over and over until they become second nature. Believers' spiritual lives should be enmeshed with every other part of life so that Christlikeness becomes second nature as well.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about spiritual disciplines on pages 1420, 1421. See also the personality profile of the early Christians on page 1419.

from the presence of the Lord,²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,^a ²¹whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. ²²For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The *LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.*' ²³And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'^a ²⁴Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold^a these days. ²⁵You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which

God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'^a ²⁶To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

PETER AND JOHN ARRESTED

4 Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, ²being greatly

3:20 ^aNU-Text and M-Text read *Christ Jesus, who was ordained for you before.* **3:23** ^aDeuteronomy 18:15, 18, 19 **3:24** ^aNU-Text and M-Text read *proclaimed.* **3:25** ^aGenesis 22:18; 26:4; 28:14

PERSONALITY PROFILE



Spiritual Disciplines

THE EARLY CHRISTIANS: UNITED IN CHRIST

(ACTS 2:42-47)

The Lord was moving mightily! A small group of believers waited in the Upper Room for the power Jesus promised from the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), and the Holy Spirit came upon this group of 120 believers, who went out and told the message of salvation. After Peter's Pentecost sermon, three thousand people believed (Acts 2:41). As the believers rejoiced in their newfound faith, they worshiped and had fellowship together, "and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

The early church was powerful and purposeful, and people responded. What made this early church so vibrant? Six characteristics give some insight, for the early church had: (1) apostolic doctrine, (2) loving fellowship, (3) powerful prayer, (4) prayerful power, (5) compassion for the needy, and (6) unity.

The early church was a vibrant group of believers seeking to learn more about the faith and desiring to act out their faith in love for one another. We may long for such a fellowship—one not riddled by doctrinal infighting, opinions over church buildings and decor, or preferences of Bible versions. We cannot go back to such a fellowship, for, thankfully, the church grew and spread across the world, and each congregation then faced its own concerns, both culturally and among its individuals. Thankfully, the Bible has been made available in many languages, and we have our choice of many versions. But the truth and the Word never change. Churches are spread across the world, with different worship styles and doctrines, but most can celebrate what they have in common—what could be called the "spiritual disciplines" of the faith.

Churches that believe and teach the Bible as God's holy Word are teaching their members to love God's Word as well. The worldwide body of Christ is united by His truth, and can join together in the corporate disciplines of prayer, worship, fellowship, compassion, and witnessing. Unity comes not from agreement on every matter, but from agreement on what matters—the essentials of the faith. As we join with believers across the globe in the spiritual disciplines that build our faith, we reveal the unity and power of the body of Christ.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about spiritual disciplines on pages 1420, 1421. See also the key passage note at Daniel 10:12 on page 1121.

¹⁵Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶“Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!”

¹⁷So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.^a

ESTHER'S BANQUET

5 Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on *her* royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house.^a ²So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, that she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter.

³And the king said to her, “What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!”

⁴So Esther answered, “If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him.”

⁵Then the king said, “Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said.” So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

⁶At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, “What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!”

⁷Then Esther answered and said, “My petition and request is *this*: ⁸If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to

the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said.”

HAMAN'S PLOT AGAINST MORDECAI

⁹So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and that he did not stand or tremble before him, he was filled with indignation against Mordecai. ¹⁰Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh. ¹¹Then Haman told them of his great riches, the multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king.

¹²Moreover Haman said, “Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king. ¹³Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.”

¹⁴Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it; then go merrily with the king to the banquet.”

And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made.

THE KING HONORS MORDECAI

6 That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. ²And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, the

4:17 ^aSeptuagint adds a prayer of Mordecai here.

5:1 ^aSeptuagint adds many extra details in verses 1 and 2.

SOUL NOTE



Seek His Face (4:16) Esther fasted and prayed, and asked her people to do the same as she prepared to risk her life by approaching King Ahasuerus. In a communal act of faith, the Jewish people fasted and petitioned God. Esther knew that her strength would come from God and that He alone could turn the heart of the king. She wisely prepared herself, however, through the disciplines of prayer and fasting. God is honored when we seek His face before we embark on service for Him.

Topic: Spiritual Disciplines

Thus the LORD my God will come,
And all the saints with You.^a

⁶ It shall come to pass in that day
That there will be no light;
The lights will diminish.

⁷ It shall be one day
Which is known to the LORD—
Neither day nor night.
But at evening time it shall happen
That it will be light.

And in that day it shall be
That living waters shall flow from
Jerusalem,
Half of them toward the eastern sea
And half of them toward the western sea;
In both summer and winter it shall occur.

⁹ And the LORD shall be King over all the
earth.

In that day it shall be—

“The LORD is one,”^a

And His name one.

¹⁰All the land shall be turned into a plain
from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem.
Jerusalem^a shall be raised up and inhabited in
her place from Benjamin’s Gate to the place of
the First Gate and the Corner Gate, and from
the Tower of Hananel to the king’s wine-
presses.

The people shall dwell in it;
And no longer shall there be utter
destruction,
But Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

¹²And this shall be the plague with which
the LORD will strike all the people who fought
against Jerusalem:

Their flesh shall dissolve while they
stand on their feet,
Their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets,
And their tongues shall dissolve in their
mouths.

¹³ It shall come to pass in that day
That a great panic from the LORD will be
among them.

Everyone will seize the hand of his
neighbor,
And raise his hand against his
neighbor’s hand;

¹⁴ Judah also will fight at Jerusalem.
And the wealth of all the surrounding
nations
Shall be gathered together:
Gold, silver, and apparel in great
abundance.

¹⁵ Such also shall be the plague
On the horse and the mule,
On the camel and the donkey,
And on all the cattle that will be in those
camps.
So shall this plague be.

THE NATIONS WORSHIP THE KING

¹⁶And it shall come to pass that everyone
who is left of all the nations which came
against Jerusalem shall go up from year to
year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts,
and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁷And it
shall be that whichever of the families of the
earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship
the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will

^{14:5} ^aOr you; Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate read Him. ^{14:9} ^aCompare Deuteronomy 6:4

^{14:10} ^aLiterally She

SOUL NOTE



Dedicated to God (14:20, 21) Zechariah ended his book with a vision of the “day of the LORD.” On that day, the phrase “‘HOLINESS TO THE LORD’ shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. . . . Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the LORD of hosts.” To be “holy” means to be set apart for sacred use. In this new Jerusalem, even mundane utensils will be considered “holy”; deliberately intended for God’s work. Our lives should be so dedicated to God that even the most mundane tasks that we undertake are sacred, holy, and done for the glory of God.

Topic: Spiritual Disciplines

mouth of
to the holy
the temple,
son of God,
ten:
over you,'
you up,
a
again, 'You
a
an exceed-
Him all the
glory. ⁹And
will give
ship me."
with you,"
all worship
y you shall
behold, an-
RY
John had
to Galilee.
and dwelt in
, in the re-
that it might
Isaiah the

15 "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles:
16 The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light,
And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death
Light has dawned."^a

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

FOUR FISHERMEN CALLED AS DISCIPLES

¹⁸And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of

men." ²⁰They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

²¹Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, ²²and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

JESUS HEALS A GREAT MULTITUDE

²³And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. ²⁴Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed

4:16 ^aIsaiah 9:1, 2

SOUL NOTE



Fasting and Prayer (4:1-3) Jesus went into the wilderness "to be tempted by the devil." He fasted forty days and forty nights in order to focus on God in prayer as He dealt with Satan. Fasting—going without food for a certain amount of time—helps people dedicate themselves to God and focus more fully on Him

Those who fast can use their hunger pangs to remind them how dependent they are on food, and hence, so much more on God. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that is meant to build a person's relationship with God. **Topic: Spiritual Disciplines**

KEY PASSAGE

THE BEST WEAPON

(4:1-11)



Temptation

Jesus' experience in the wilderness provides a lesson on how to deal with temptation. *Being tempted is not a sin, but giving in to temptation is.*

After fasting and praying in the wilderness for forty days, Jesus was physically weakened and hungry. At that point, Satan came and suggested that Jesus turn stones into bread. Under most circumstances, eating bread would be fine, but for Jesus to have followed Satan's directive by using His power for such a self-serving purpose would have been sinful.

Jesus resisted Satan's temptations with the Word of God. While Satan was twisting Scripture in order to justify sin, Jesus was using Scripture correctly in order to resist Satan and sin. God's Word, correctly interpreted and hidden in our hearts, is our best weapon against Satan's craftiest temptations.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about temptation on pages 62, 63. See also the personality profile of Samson on page 320.

¹⁹Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

²⁰Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.

²¹Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

²²Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. ²³And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for^a you serve the Lord Christ. ²⁵But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

4 Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

CHRISTIAN GRACES

²Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; ³meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, ⁴that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

⁵Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time. ⁶Let your speech al-

ways *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

FINAL GREETINGS

⁷Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. ⁸I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he^a may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, ⁹with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They will make known to you all things which *are happening* here.

¹⁰Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), ¹¹and Jesus who is called Justus. These *are my* only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.

¹²Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete^a in all the will of

3:24 ^aNU-Text omits *for*. **4:8** ^aNU-Text reads *you may know our circumstances and he may*.

4:12 ^aNU-Text reads *fully assured*.

SOUL NOTE



Making Melody (3:16) God should always be the focus of our worship. Music can be a beautiful part of the worship service. Through "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," believers sing their praises to the Lord. The early church did not have Bibles for each worshiper, so they often would teach God's Word through music. Today we have many styles of music. From old hymns to contemporary songs to praise choruses, music that is grounded in the truth of God's Word honors Him.

Topic: Praise and Worship

SOUL NOTE



In His Name (3:17) This verse summarizes the Christian life. Everything believers say and do should be "in the name of the Lord Jesus." In other words, their words and actions should represent Jesus Christ. So how do our Christian lives reflect this standard? Do we greet each new day in the name of the Lord Jesus? Do we go about our daily activities in the name of the Lord Jesus? Do we talk with our family and friends in the name of the Lord Jesus? Do we handle our finances in the name of the Lord Jesus? **Topic: Spiritual Disciplines**

it is received with thanksgiving; ⁵for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

A GOOD SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST

⁶If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. ⁷But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. ⁸For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. ⁹This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. ¹⁰For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach,^a because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. ¹¹These things command and teach.

TAKE HEED TO YOUR MINISTRY

¹²Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit,^a in faith, in purity. ¹³Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. ¹⁴Do not neglect the gift that

is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. ¹⁵Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

TREATMENT OF CHURCH MEMBERS

5 Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort ⁵him as a father, younger men as brothers, ²older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.

HONOR TRUE WIDOWS

³Honor widows who are really widows. ⁴But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and^a acceptable before God. ⁵Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and con-

4:10 ^aNU-Text reads *we labor and strive*.

4:12 ^aNU-Text omits *in spirit*. **5:4** ^aNU-Text and M-Text omit *good and*.

SOUL NOTE



Stay on Track (4:7) Anyone who has begun a new exercise regimen realizes the self-control needed, as well as the constant temptation to give up. It takes great discipline to keep exercising in order to see results. The same is true for spiritual training. Believers need to "exercise" themselves "toward godliness." It doesn't happen overnight; godliness is a process of discipline and self-control, with some days being easier than others. Every day brings temptation and difficulties, and believers must discipline themselves in order to stay on track with God. How is your personal spiritual exercise program? Are you seeing any results? **Topic: Spiritual Disciplines**

SOUL NOTE



Trust Talk (4:10) Believers have a great future promised by God. They train themselves toward godliness not *in order* to be saved but because *they are* saved and want to be ready for eternity with Christ. They are willing to work hard, deny themselves certain activities, and face reproach from an unbelieving world because they "trust in the living God." Their trust is in the One who died and rose again—not in a philosophy, a set of rules, personal achievement, or a standard of behavior. That trust in the living God is their anchor, their hope, their certain future. When we place our trust in God, we have nothing to fear. **Topic: Trust**