

READ

## More Disciplines of a Disciple

BY DR. RON JONES



The list of spiritual disciplines we could talk about seems endless. For example, in his best-selling book *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster lists no less than twelve spiritual disciplines we can and should practice. He categorizes them as inward, outward, and corporate disciplines. In the previous session, I offered a different way of thinking by listing the mind, body, heart, and soul as the first areas of life that require the kind of spiritual training that leads to godliness (1 Timothy 4:7-8). Other areas that require the same include our time, money, will, and relationships. How we discipline these last four areas of life is a worthy discussion.

Imagine someone depositing \$1,440 into your bank account every day. The catch is you must spend it at a rate of \$1 per minute or the money will transfer back out of your account. That's what time is like. Each day contains 24 hours or 1,440 minutes.

Time, of course, is a non-reusable resource. We cannot save time or store it in a retrieval system. As the old saying goes, we must use it or lose it. Truly, time is of the essence because we never get back the time we waste. According to the Bible, we can only

redeem it (Ephesians 5:15-16). But what exactly is time?

The famous physicist Dr. Stephen Hawking wrote a book titled *A Brief History of Time*. Honestly, reading it left me still scratching my head about time. In my opinion, Dr. Stephen Olford, a pastor, offers the best definition of time and certainly one that is less scientific. He says, "Time is a fragment of eternity given by God to man as a solemn stewardship." In other words, time is a sacred trust for which we will give an account. Time is also a creation concept and the rhythm of life ordained by God (Genesis 1:3, Ecclesiastes 3:1).

We can spend a lot of time and money learning time management techniques. However, nothing motivates me to spend my time wisely more than the thought of one day standing before God and hearing Him ask, "What did you do with the time I gave you on earth?"

A conversation about the discipline of our time leads to the same about money because some people say time is money. As followers of Jesus, the most important question we must answer about money is this: Whose money is it, anyway? Jesus talked more about

money than He did heaven and hell combined. He knew that money could easily become the god we worship. That's why He said point blank, "You cannot serve God and money" (Matthew 6:24). He also got to the heart of the money matter by saying, "Where your treasure is that's where your heart is also" (Matthew 6:21).

Transitioning our worldview of money and property from ownership to stewardship is not easy. The material things we possess in life threaten to possess us, and they die a slow death. They are some of the last things to come under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Once we resolve the money matter and accept the fact that all we have belongs to God (Psalm 24:1), and that we are merely His money and property managers (Luke 16:1-14), then we can begin talking about the biblical way to discipline and manage the wealth God has entrusted to us.

Our will also requires discipline and must be brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus famously prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39). Even Jesus, the sinless Son of God, learned obedience and submission to the Father's will through suffering (Hebrews 5:8).

Picture a wild stallion that runs freely in the open range but also has the potential to become a thoroughbred racehorse that wins the Kentucky Derby. Horse trainers talk about "breaking" such a horse. In other words, the horses' will must be brought into compliance with the rider's will. That's the only way she will become a champion. In the same way, God who redeemed us also sees great potential in us. But our wild and stubbornly sinful will must be broken and brought in submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Only then will we glorify God and fulfill the purpose for which He created us.

Finally, our relationships require healthy discipline. We were created for community, hard-wired for connection in human relationships. That shouldn't surprise us because perfect fellowship exists in the triune Godhead between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Also, more than 50 "one another" passages in the New Testament bears witness to the fact that we need each other, whether we are willing to admit it or not. The best place for us to experience authentic, biblical community is in the church, a body of assembled believers in Jesus who, like a family, brings comfort to people in a harsh and sinful world (Acts 2:42-47).

# REFLECT

## BY ANSWERING QUESTIONS

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, indicate whether you manage your time, talent, and treasure according to an ownership (1) or a stewardship (5) worldview.

1 2 3 4 5

2. Read Psalm 90. How does Moses reflect on the brevity of life? How should the way you prioritize your time change because you are a follower of Jesus?

3. Check the statement below that best describes the way you think about money and material things.

- “What’s mine is mine and I’m going to keep it.”
- “What’s yours is mine and I’m going to take it.”
- “What’s mine is God’s and I’m going to share it.”
- “What’s ours is God’s and we’re going to share it.”

4. Read Matthew 6:33 and Proverbs 3:9-10 and then honestly reflect on your personal financial life and budget. Check all the statements below that describe you.

- “I give to God as a first priority in my budget.”
- “I give to God after all my bills are paid.”
- “Giving to God is not a priority in my financial life.”
- “I’m selfish and have a hard time giving my money away.”
- “Generosity is a way of life for me.”



**This quiz draws from content delivered in the video plus this study guide.**

1. How should a Christian view his or her time on earth?
  - Sacred trust
  - Fragment of eternity
  - Non-reusable resource
  - Something to redeem
  - All of the above
  
2. Jesus taught his disciples to invest their treasure (money) in earthly things. T F
  
3. The discipline of giving my money back to God ...
  - Makes me more like God
  - Moves my heart closer to God
  - Activates God's economic plan
  - All of the above
  
4. Where is the best place to experience the authentic biblical community for which we were created?
  - Neighborhood bar
  - Local church
  - VFW lodge
  - Rotary club
  - Little League baseball games
  
5. The free exercise of my will according to what feels good at the moment is the best way to follow Jesus and grow spiritually. T F
  
6. When Jesus prayed to the Father, "Not as I will, but as you will," He was showing signs of moral weakness. T F
  
7. God created us for relationships of integrity. T F
  
8. My financial life and my spiritual life have nothing to do with each other. T F

Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. Proverbs 3:9-10

**SCRIPTURE  
MEMORY  
TIPS**

- 1** WRITE THE VERSE ON A 3X5 CARD AND CARRY AROUND WITH YOU.
- 2** READ IT THROUGHOUT THE DAY AND SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE YOU GO TO BED AT NIGHT.
- 3** SAY IT ALOUD TO YOURSELF. RECORD IT ON YOUR SMART PHONE AND PLAY IT BACK TO YOURSELF.
- 4** WRITE IT OUT SEVERAL TIMES.
- 5** FIND A PARTNER AND RECITE THE VERSE TO EACH OTHER.



### Answers to Quiz

1. All of the above
2. F
3. All of the above
4. Local church
5. F
6. F
7. T
8. F

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### Starting Point: A Disciple's First Steps

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### About the Author

*Ron Jones* is the lead pastor of Atlantic Shores Baptist Church in Virginia Beach, a radio Bible teacher, and author of *Mysteries of the Afterlife: Exploring Its Amazing Secrets*. His ministry extends beyond the church he serves through a daily radio broadcast called *Something Good with Dr. Ron Jones*. A lifelong learner, Ron earned degrees from Purdue University, Dallas Theological Seminary, and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He lives five minutes from the beach with his wife Cathryn. They have two kids in college who are also NCAA athletes.