

Remember, It's About Jesus

Why pray when it appears that your prayers go unanswered? Why keep on reading the Bible when it seems like you're getting little from it? Why continue worshiping God privately when you feel no spiritual refreshment? Why persist in keeping a journal when writing your entries bores you? Why engage in fasting, silence and solitude, serving, and other spiritual disciplines when you sense meager benefits from doing so?

It's easy to forget the real purpose of anything that's as habitual as the activities of the spiritual life. And purposeless spiritual practices soon become dry routines that shrivel our souls.

The apostle Paul wrote of his concern that something like this would happen to the Christians at Corinth: "But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3, NASB). Notice that the direction of devotion is to be "to Christ." Spirituality is not an end in itself; it's about Jesus.

When we realize just who this God-Man—this Jesus who is called the Christ—is, we understand why the spiritual life is about Him: "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18). So, "in all things," including our spirituality, Jesus should "have the preeminence."

That's why God inspired Paul to tell us, "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness" [that is, Christlikeness] (1 Timothy 4:7, NASB). All our spiritual disciplines should be practiced in pursuit of Christlikeness. We pursue *outward* conformity to Christlikeness as we practice the same disciplines He practiced. More importantly, we pursue intimacy with Jesus and the *inner* transformation to Christlikeness when we look to Him *through* the spiritual disciplines.

So when we go to the Bible, we should look preeminently for what Jesus says to us in it, for what it tells us about Jesus, for how we are to respond to Jesus, for what we are to do for Jesus, and so forth. When we pray, we want to pray in Jesus' name (see John 14:13-14); that is, we should come in the righteousness of Jesus (and not our own), and to pray what we believe Jesus would pray in our circumstances. Our perennial purpose for practicing any and all of the spiritual disciplines should be a Christ-centered purpose. Authentic *Christ*-ian spirituality is about Jesus Christ.

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