

Eighth Grade- Spiritual Practices: What are they and why do we do them?

In this session we want to introduce our students to the concept of spiritual practices, sometimes also referred to as spiritual disciplines. But we don't want to merely talk about what they are and how to do them. We want to first take time to talk about why we do them, and the reasons God desires us to do them. A proper understanding of the "why" behind these practices will help make them so much more meaningful and impactful, and help students avoid the legalism and performance anxiety that can so often become a stumbling block in the way of true intimacy with God.

Introducing the Topic

First, we want to give students space to share what they already know about spiritual practices, and provide space for everyone to learn from each other!

-Have you ever spent time with God on your own? What did you do during that time? What worked well for you?

-What are ways or places you feel you are able to encounter or meet God?

-What comes to mind when I say the phrase "spiritual disciplines"? What have you heard about them? What do you know about them?

-People in our culture often have a bad connotation around the word "discipline", why do you think that is?

-Can you think of a scenario where discipline would help a relationship? How do you think discipline could help in your relationship with God?

-Explain that in this session we're going to take time to learn about spiritual disciplines, also called spiritual practices. They mean the same thing! A spiritual practice is a habit that helps create and protect space for us to encounter God. For example, if you make a habit of reading your Bible, you are creating space for God to speak to you in His word. If you make a habit of taking walks and listening to what God might have to say, you're creating space for God to speak to you through nature and solitude. God wants to know us, and for us to know Him. He desires intimacy with His children, and He's made ways for that intimacy to exist. But with life being as busy and distracting as it is, we need habits and practices that protect time for our relationship with God to flourish.

Scripture Study

As you transition to the Scripture Study portion of this session, remind students that Scripture is where we turn for truth. We want to continually reiterate that we study Scripture not just for the "Christian take" on a matter, but God's revealed word, given to us out of love for our good.

-Read I Timothy 4:7-8 and then Proverbs 4:23 together.

-What do you hear these verses saying?

-What do you think it means to train yourself for godliness?

-What do you think it means to “keep your heart”?

-Why do you think the authors of these two passages use these terms to describe the process of growing and maturing in faith?

-Read II Corinthians 3:18 together.

-What do you hear this verse saying?

-How does this verse say we are transformed?

-What does this verse say is the result of being transformed?

Practical Application

In this section we want to give students time to process and connect all the different things they learned in Scripture, and see how learning more about spiritual practices can benefit their own life and walk with the Lord.

-Is there any area of your life you wish you could change? What have you tried in the past?

-How does Scripture say we are transformed?

-What are the biggest obstacles or distractions to being transformed?

-Why do you think we have to be intentional in how we set out to encounter God?