



Check the Gauges

Part 5 – The Spiritual Gauge

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We're in this series called *Check the Gauges*. We're finishing it today. Shay took us to *The Relational Gauge* last week. Today, we're talking about *The Spiritual gauge*. We've looked at how personal wellness leads to ministry effectiveness. Our desire today is to work and to share with all of you in here and online who feel as though you're empty, and you're like, "I've had a walk with the Lord for a long time, but I just feel spiritually dry." Or maybe you're brand new to the faith and you want to know what it means to live a full life in Christ, what it mean to be filled by God.

I get to do marriage events around the county. I love doing it. I usually start every event by sharing that Jesus is your source, Satan is your enemy, and your spouse is your companion. And if you want to experience high levels of marital satisfaction, never treat your spouse like the source or the enemy. You can say amen to this – Your spouse is not your source, your children are not your source, your boss is not your source, your job is not your source, your pastor is not your source. I want to make sure you're all clear on that one. Jesus is your source and if you want to be filled by God, you have to be connected to the source, and stay connected to the source.

Today, we are going to look at what that means. In John 15, we read, Jesus says, "***I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing.***" So, for many, you're just connected to the wrong source, and I would hope that today you would fire other people as your source. People, places, and things make terrible sources. Jesus is our source. ***If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers.***

My kids, Corynn and Caden live Downtown. After the last storm, everybody started trimming up their trees and they just kind of lay it down the road, and it goes the entire length of their road. The first week, the leaves were still somewhat green, but for the weeks following, they got to the point where they were very dead. The bottom line is once those branches hit the street, they were already dead. They were not connected to the source. Here's the interesting thing – some of them still looked pretty good, but as the weeks went on, the more they were detached from the source or the tree and the yard, the more dead they looked. Jesus said, "***If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.***"

We've been going over these five gauges in our lives. Today, we are on the spiritual gauge, but we wanted you to see throughout this whole series how they are all linked together. If you have a relational crisis or a marriage crisis, it can lead you to a financial crisis.

The financial crisis can cause you to lose sleep, and when you don't have a good night's rest, you know what that does to you emotionally. Today, we're seeing how all of it is tied to the spiritual gauge.

Maybe you've read or heard in the last couple of years... I know you've heard of The Great Resignation. A lot of people have left their jobs and have not returned and there was a worker shortage, and we're like were did they all go? But alongside that conversation is this great resignation in the church. People didn't return to church. That's obviously not the case at 10:00 am at Woodland Hills Family Church, but I've noticed this. This is my observation; I have no research to back this up, but the conservative that churches that I go to are growing. Churches that have maintained strong theology and have not drifted in what they believe, have seen growth. Those who have drifted a bit or away from truth... I have just seen there is a struggle. It's interesting that in a lot of these articles I read, that's never discussed. But it's this balance that we're looking at today. Not really balance on this chart, but the drift to burnout.

Some of you in here are drifting in your faith because you're no longer connected to the source. You've looked to other sources. Some of you maybe have been drifting in the gathering and church wasn't as important to you, but maybe now you're getting back into it. But it's still not something you do consistently. We see this in all our relationships in marriage. If I stop talking to Amy, we're going to drift. If I stop coming home, we're going to drift. If I stop caring for her, we're going to drift. So, there are those who drift and those who have not found their way back to the church. I get that and I know there are studies out there that show that, but we also have seasoned believers in here who are feeling burned out. Your spiritual gauge is on empty because of how much you've done for the Lord, and you got to this place that you're shocked that in your work for the Lord you meet people who are ungrateful.

You're like, "Ted, I serve at Woodland Hills all the time and I'm shocked at the number of people I meet... Most people are just great, but there are some people that are unkind. I'm a volunteer!"

I think a good example of this is what we have in our free coffee shop out there in the courtyard. I want to emphasize the word *free* because we never complain about *free*. I'm shocked at the number of people that come up, make a requests that we don't have, and they are like... It's *free*. Every drink in here is free. You take what you get, and you don't pitch a fit. So, if you go out to our coffee house right now, you're going to find people... I mean they pour themselves into that place each week. And there is really only one attitude we take when we receive something free and that is gratefulness. But some people burn out because it's like when we serve and when we give and when we pour into, a lot of times, it's not received. So, you're feeling empty because you're looking for other people to fill you up. And you have forgotten why you started in the first place. You have forgotten who your source is.

So, whether you're drifting or burning out, here's what we know. **Avoiding burn out, avoiding drift is easier than recovery.** So, today, if you are brand new to the faith, we are going to look at spiritual disciplines. What you can do to stay connected to the true and only source of life. For others, we are going to look at disciplines and you know them, but maybe you don't know all of them. Or maybe you grew up in a church that practiced some of them, like I did. But I never learned about the other disciplines until I left home. There was never an emphasis at least.

Drift happens, burnout happens, but don't allow your work for God to cause you to drift from your first love in Jesus.

For those of you who have been putting time in here for quite some time... I get it. You work in Critter Street, you work in Wildwoods. Parents drop kids off and every now and then, it pops into your mind, *You've been dropping these kids off for a long time and I haven't seen you serving. When are you going to roll up your sleeves and get involved.*

We can easily take our eyes off the one and only true source of life and put them on other people. And what we want to talk about... I heard a pastor say this years ago. *"Don't allow your work for God to destroy God's work in you."*

We want to be full, so every time we show up to serve, every time we show up to give, every time we show up to help others, we are full and ready to give. The church at Ephesus had forgotten this. They drifted and yet they were doing a lot of great work. I wouldn't even say they were in burnout, but they drifted from their first true love and Jesus had this to say.

We read this in Revelation 2: 2-5, ***2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.*** That's a good resume right there. That's a good job, you are standing on truth, you're doing the work of ministry, but look at what Verse 4 says.

4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. You have forgotten why you even started in the first place. So, maybe that's you and maybe that's why you're empty... I'd also use spiritually dry. You just don't feel like what you do matters and when you do study and when you do pray, you just feel like maybe half a tank or a quarter of a tank. So, what do you do? Jesus gives them a way back. ***5 Consider how far you have fallen!*** If you are on empty right now and disconnected from the true and only source of life, and you professed faith in Jesus years ago, today, as we go through these spiritual disciplines, I want you to consider where you once were and where you are now. And when you really do the gauge on this and... Figure out where you are and draw the line. "I'm at a quarter, I'm at an eighth of a tank." Take it to your Father in heaven and repent for how far you have fallen or how you have drifted. He hears, he receives, and there is a way back.

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon says, anyone among the living has hope. There is hope for everyone here whether your burned out or drifting. ***Repent and do the things you did at first.***

And we are going to look at some of those things today that you did at first and then add some new ones for the majority of us that maybe it was never taught or practiced in the church we grew up in.

If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

I grew up going to, as you know, an independent, fundamental, premillennial, King James Version only Baptist church. And that included going to an independent, fundamental, premillennial, King James Version only Baptist camp. I went there every summer. I can remember, and it stuck with me because I heard it so many times. When a young person came forward and gave their life to Christ and they were saved, they would stand up at the front and the camp director would point down to them and I'll never

forget. He said it every single time after asking the question, "Have you confessed your sins. Have you trusted Jesus as your savior?" He would end this all by saying, "Now listen, here's the key – read your bible and pray every day."

There are some of you in here that read your Bible and pray every day and you're asking, "Why do I not feel full?" "I read my Bible and I pray every day, Ted. We're not legalistic about this. I may miss a quiet time, I may not get through my Bible reading plan, but why do I, who have made that a priority..."

I'm here to tell you read your Bible and pray every day is not all there is. There's more.

One author I dove back into this week... He's a deep thinker but a great writer. His name is Dallas Willard. He's an American philosopher who specialized in Christian spiritual formation. He was actually born in St. Louis. He went to be with the Lord just ten years ago. He's one of those that when you read his book, you get through a paragraph or you get to the end and you're like, "I think I know what he says, but I should probably read that paragraph again. Because he's such a deep thinker and writer. He has a great book out called *The Spirit of Disciplines*. It's still used as a resource by so many in the church and so many leaders and so many pastors.

Here's how Dallas Willard describes spiritual disciplines: "*Mimicking Jesus' activity. Doing what Jesus did.*"

I love the analogy that he uses of sports. You know the athlete that your pastor is, it resonates with me when I read stories about what it means to be a great athlete. He says, "The problem with young athletes is that young athletes go onto the field, they go onto the court, they go onto the course, and they want to play like they are heroes. They may have the same level of natural ability, the problem is that young athletes don't take the time, the energy, they don't put the practice in to live life like their hero does on and off the court." He says, "So when they get on there and they want to swing and they want to hit and they want to do it just like their hero, they're not living up to that level because they're not living their life like that athlete."

As I read that I thought, *Who are the athletes that I looked up to growing up and today?* The first one... I grew up outside of Chicago, so it was Michael Jordan. Now, I probably don't have the same natural ability as Michael Jordan, but I did play in the 7th and 8th grades. Play is a strong word. I practiced in 7th and 8th grades. Didn't get a lot of game time. I was the guy that there's a minute left and we're down by 40 points. "Put Ted in." But I wore Jordans. Wearing Jordans didn't make me Jordan. Do you know why? I didn't do anything – timewise or energy. I didn't behave my life on and off the court like Michael Jordan.

So, I retired from basketball in 8th grade. I took on golf. We all know, we watch Tiger Woods. There are golfers in here that want to be awesome golfers. You get out there. I've been with you. You think you're Tiger Woods, and I get to be the one that reminds you – you ain't Tiger Woods. Do you know how many hours and do you know what Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods did? Do you know the amount of time and energy they put in and the reps that they put in? He wasn't a hero of mine growing up, but I just watched a documentary on McEnroe. I cannot recommend this because he is a potty mouth.

He is a terrible potty mouth. He's great at tennis, he's got total attitude and total potty mouth, but he won Wimbledon. He wins the tournament back in the 80's and it's what he did on and off the court.

Dallas Willard says, "If you want to be a follower of Jesus and live your life like Jesus, know what Jesus did, and do that." Don't just come to church and learn about it and leave. No. Learn about it and then go do it. Put it into practice. And not once or not just on Sunday or not just on Sunday and Monday where by Wednesday, you've forgotten and you're kind of drifting... No, it's your every day, ordinary walk around life is taking on the life, teachings, and practices of Jesus.

I watched this tennis thing. I told Amy... I got off the plane and I'm like, "Hey, I just watched this unbelievable thing on tennis and I'm ready for pickle ball. I think I watched enough videos I'll probably win every tournament Branson has."

Football kickers just amaze me. They have one job to do, and they have to deliver. How many times have you watched an athlete, especially a kicker, I know I've had this attitude going *I could totally do that. It's not that far from the goal post.* A couple of years ago I was with my friend, the coach at Liberty University. Liberty is my alma mater. I love liberty. I'm back there with Coach Freeze and he's taking me around and showing me the football practice field and all that.

I walk by and I'm like *this is my moment.* I go, "Hey, do you mind if I kick an extra point?" He goes, "Sure." So, he was my holder. I made ten attempts. I'm only going to show you the final attempt. I'm going to ask that you hold your applause. Here's me on my tenth attempt. I want you to see my form. It was so close. That was it. And then he said, "Ted, I want you to hold it for our kicker." That kicker came over and I immediately thought to myself, *coach held that ten times for me. I could have broken his finger. I'm not skilled in this at all. Why?* I've never done it, but I get out there and I give it a shot. Then I hold it for their kicker. He drilled that thing into the back net. I was amazed. I started talking to him and I realized... I know I don't have the natural ability. Let's put that aside for just a second. But the amount of time and dedication they put into it.

So, for those of you who have disconnected from the true and only source, you say you love Jesus, you want to walk with Jesus, well, today, let's talk about connecting to the true and only source of life and living life as he did, taking on the teaching, the life, and the practices of Jesus.

Dallas Willard says this about discipleship, and I love it: *"It's rearranging my life around the activities, around which Jesus lived his life, it gives me the opportunity to experience true transformation."*

This week, I thought about all the... I grew up in the era of the WWJD bracelets. We need to stop asking what would Jesus do and start doing what Jesus did. Because what are we talking about? Whether it's kicking or tennis or golf or the shot, it's muscle memory. It's like when you get in the situation, you're ready to go. I love the movie Top Gun Maveric. One of my favorite scenes in that movie is when Maverick gets called back to Top Gun and he's standing at the end of that long table. The admiral says to him, "Maveric, your reputation precedes you." And he goes, "Thank you." It wasn't a compliment. What was his reputation? He was a rebel, but in training other pilots, he had one simple rule he gave the pilots. "I'm going to train you. I'm going to put you through more drills and more exercises so that when you're face to face with the enemy, I don't want you to think; I want you to act."

So, when you and I take on the life and the practices of Jesus, when we are in a situation, how should I treat this person? How should I make this ethical decision at work? How should I give over here? I don't have to ask what would Jesus do in this situation? If I'm walking with Jesus, I'm filled by God, I can make the right decision. It's in my muscle memory. Being filled by God, listening to the Holy Spirit of God, we're ready to go. So, don't just ask what would Jesus do, start by doing what Jesus did, and that's what we're talking about today. We're not called Jesus listeners. We're called Jesus followers, taking what he said and doing it. Taking what he did and doing it.

We read about the wise and the foolish builder in Matthew 7: 24-27, **24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine...** Leaves, goes to Cracker Barrel and watches the game, you're set, you're ready. No. It's he who hears these words **and puts them into practice, does something with them.** That person **is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.**

25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. Compare and contrast to the foolish builder in Verse 26. **26 But everyone who hears these words of mine...** leaves church, does nothing with them, who reads the Bible, studies the Bible... This is what I hope you see today. Discipleship is far more than Bible study. A lot of people hear the word *discipleship* thinking Bible study. It's far more than that. It's learning what God said and doing it, putting it into practice. If you don't put into practice, you're like the foolish man who built his house on sand. **and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.**

Verse 27 reads like Verse 25 because it's the same storm. Some of you are like, "Well that person doesn't know what I'm going through." They've had storms in their life just like you have storms. Maybe they withheld during the storm and you're not because they have a different foundation. I don't get to choose every storm that comes into my life, but here's the good news. I do get to choose my foundation. I 100% get to choose what I do with God's word.

27 "The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." It's the exact same storm. If you've ever wondered why can that person stand up and you end up falling with a great crash, it's a foundation issue, not a storm issue. And how do you work on your foundation. You take what we're talking about today and you actually do something with it.

In James 1: 22 we read, **22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.**

So, let's talk a little deeper about these spiritual disciplines. We're going to go right to Dallas Willard on it. I'm not going to give you an exhaustive list, but it's probably a list for most of us in here. We had staff, in the debrief after the 8:15, going, "I never knew that was a discipline." So, we're not going to give all of Dallas Willard's disciplines today, but here's what I want you to consider. Maybe you've been taught that spiritual disciplines are all you need to be filled by God and to stay connected to the source. But you have not been taught all of the spiritual disciplines.

So, we are opening our hearts and minds today to God's word to say what are the disciplines that maybe we're missing. Or you've been taught all of them throughout your lifetime. Maybe you've been taught the spiritual disciplines are all you need to be filled by God, but you don't practice them. They are not a daily part of your life. You don't practice all of the spiritual disciplines.

Dallas Willard breaks down the disciplines into two categories. The first category is Disciplines of abstinence, and the second category is disciplines of engagement. We're going to look at six from each.

Disciplines of Abstinence: To refrain voluntarily and temporarily from normal human needs or normal human activities so as to disentangle our soul from their claims on us. And that's been a sacred echo for me this week. I love the term the disentangled soul. Some of you right now have a hard time staying connected to the true and only source of life because you are all entangled with all of these human needs.

Before we get into the list of engagement, we start by disentangling our soul from the things that we need in life, but we want to make sure they don't have a grip on us.

Solitude: we'll look at this in just a moment. Jesus practiced solitude. Shay did a whole gauge on this last week but yes, we need relationships. We need to be very inspiring people, not very draining people. But we need people in our lives. But there are times we need to disconnect from people and get alone. You're going to see why that's so important when we get to prayer, when we get to studying, meditating, memorizing.

Silence: Refraining from our need. Again, voluntarily and temporarily, but stepping back from our need for conversation. I only have one joke about monks and you're going to get it right now. It's about solitude and silence.

This young man decided he was going to practice these two disciplines for the rest of his life, so he joined a monastery. When he showed up, the head monk said, "You get to say two words a year. The first year went by and the head monk came to the young monk and said, "What are your two words?" He said, "Bed hard." He went another year, and the head monk says, "What are your two words?" "Food bad." Then the third year, he asked "What are your two words?" He said, "I quit." The head monk said, "Good, you've been complaining since the day you got here."

There are parents in here right now going, "I'm going to start with the spiritual discipline of silence. I'm going to move into a cone of silence this week." But refraining from that need for human conversation.

Fasting: I grew up in an independent Baptist church and this was not a spiritual discipline we were taught. We were taught pot luck. I didn't learn about fasting until I went to Liberty University. They declared campus wide fasts. Fasting is disentangling your soul from food and wine. Some of you need to practice this, so that food and wine won't have a grip on you. That may be a practice you start this weekend. You pick a time. Maybe from 6:00 Tuesday night to 6:00 Wednesday night. You're going to take that time to dive into prayer and use mealtime for prayers or study.

Frugality: We don't like to think about this one too much, but you have plenty of money to do all you want, but it doesn't matter... This is a spiritual discipline where we are able to say, "Money will not have a grip on me." Again, money is not evil. It's the love of money. We looked at that in the financial gauge. But I can walk through this store with things in it that I love and walk out buying nothing. Frugality is saying I can afford luxury. I can afford really nice, but I'm going to refrain temporarily, voluntarily, so that money doesn't have a grip on my soul. I need to disentangle myself and my soul from possessions.

Secrecy: This is practicing your good works so that nobody knows about it. If you're going to give money to something, you don't have to put it on a big check and present it. Just give. And do it as quietly as possible.

Chastity: For those of you not married, you practice this discipline up to the day of your honeymoon. For those of you married... We read in 1 Corinthians 7... I hope you see this now, the abstinence and engagement. Because what does Paul say? There is a time for a husband and wife to refrain from sex and let it be for the purpose of what? Another spiritual discipline.

Prayer: Let's take that time. So, there are times you refrain from sex even in marriage.

This is the disentangling of our soul, so sex and money and food and wine and relationships and words, they don't have a grip on us. That's between you and the Lord this morning.

What has a grip on you right now? That's going to be the one maybe you start with this week.

Here are the disciplines of engagement: *"The practices which enable our disentangled soul to participate in the life and activities of the Kingdom."* That's Dallas Willard's definition and it's perfect.

Study: Which can include memorization, meditation. Travis Brawner, one of our elders, is across the way right now teaching a class called habits. Almost all of the disciplines we're talking about today are in that class. We've talked about study. There is more than just study.

Worship: That you would participate in this outside of our gathering. Worship is more than just music. It's more than just a day of the week. It's more than a place you go. It's expressing love to God. For me, I obviously love the music part and I sing all week long. I want this to be a discipline I never let go of.

Prayer: you saw the disentangling of our soul. You're like, "What do I do in the time when I'm not eating?" Pray. Worship. "What do I do in the times where we're not intimate?" Prayer, worship. "What do I do in the times where we refrain from using words." Prayer, worship, study.

Celebration: You're going to see in a moment we don't refrain permanently from all that we just looked at in the other disciplines because there are times to celebrate. There are times to eat together with glad and sincere hearts. We need food to live. It's something we do to disentangle our soul.

Service: This is where a lot of people find their burn out because this has been their primary spiritual discipline. I love Dallas Willard's quote. It's probably the quote he's best known for. Some of you are hearing all of this and going, "Ted, grace is how we are saved. For by grace we're saved through faith.

It's not of our works, it's not of all this stuff. Here's what he says for those that would say, "I don't need to do all of this to be connected to the true and only source."

"Grace is opposed to works, not effort." So, yes, I am saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Amen. But if I want to stay connected to the true and only source of life, that's why we practice these disciplines.

Fellowship. I know there are many watching online. I can't imagine this would be true of anyone watching online. If you've not found your way back to a physical gathering, online is great and I would even call it a supplement, but it's not and never will be a substitution for the real thing. So, my encouragement to you... My son's in college right now. We face timed yesterday. I'm grateful for Facetime, but if that's all I ever have with my son from here on out, No. I was with him last week. I flew him to where I was just so I could hug him. I'm not saying come here so I can hug you, but I'm saying someone will hug you. I'll point to a few people that will hug you, if that's what you need, but you need fellowship. Here's what Dr. Tony Evans says about fellowship, about the gathering, and I think you can put almost any of the disciplines in this statement. *I hear people say, 'I don't have to go to church to be a Christian.' And they are absolutely right. Salvation is through faith alone in Christ alone. You don't have to go home to be married, but stay away long enough and your relationship will be affected. it will be changed."*

So, let's look at the scripture on some of these disciplines again. Not all of them, as we wrap this up and hopefully you are going to pick one or two that you've neglected or that maybe you've never been taught. You say, "okay those are going to be the ones that I run with this week." We read about Jesus in Mark 1: 35 - ³⁵ ***Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place...*** Here's what I want you to see in the text that we are about to look at. I want you to see how disentangling the grip of people and their demands and needs, how disentangling from people or how disentangling from food connects with the other disciplines. In this case, Jesus went to a solitary place. He got away from the demands of people, ***where he prayed.*** Again, we want to take on the life of Jesus.

In Matthew, in the Sermon on the Mount, we get disciplines connected to each other. I want to give you three examples of it, and they are all kind of the same as we talk about giving, prayer, and fasting. Jesus said, ***2 "So when you give to the needy...When you serve others in that way. ...do not announce it with trumpets...Or big checks. ...as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets... If the purpose of your giving is recognition... to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. – Matthew 6: 2.***

They were looking for the recognition and they got it. There is no further reward after that for them. So, what do we have here? We have serving, giving, coupled with secrecy. I don't have to announce it. I don't need everybody to know what I just did.

Here's an application. I think you can have fun with this. For those of you who have a few extra bucks this week, or maybe not; it's going to be sacrificial. There is no greater joy in life than for you to put cash in an unmarked envelope and give to someone in need. Some of you are like, "I did that and went to jail for it, Ted..." I'm not talking about bribes. You know what I'm talking about. I'm talking about you give

to someone, they are blessed... I hear it all the time at this church. People who have received a financial blessing from someone. I don't know who gave it to them. They are just assuming it was from somebody in the church. They were like, "They didn't even know I had this need, but they gave me this." They are all emotional. What great joy that person has. What greater joy for this person has who was able to meet that need.

When you pray, it's the exact same thing. Just like giving to the needy. **5 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. – Matthew 6: 5-6**

One more example from that. When you fast, when you give, when you pray... here are three spiritual disciplines coupled with another discipline of secrecy.

16 "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. – Matthew 6: 16

One of the groomsmen at my wedding, 27 years ago, showed up and he wasn't eating with us at the rehearsal dinner. I kind of pulled him aside and asked him what was going on. It was at that moment that I realized he was coming out of a 40 day fast. We had just graduated and he was trying to figure out I's calling on his life. He didn't discuss it much with me. Nobody in the wedding party... No one knew what was going on. So, don't disfigure your face to show others how holy you are.

In Mathew 4: 4, Jesus is fasting in the wilderness. **4 I answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone...' We can disentangle from food. ...but on every word that comes from the mouth of I. – Matthew 4: 4**

So, there are a couple of warnings I want to give you as we draw this to a close. There are warnings with the spiritual disciplines. Obviously, the warning of pride as we just looked at in the Sermon on the Mount. There's a warning of doing this to be like, "Hey, I want you to know..." That's not why we do it at all.

There are a couple other warnings that go with this.

1. if you neglect the disciplines, you'll drift. This is what we do to stay connected to the true and only source of life and it's what we do to be filled by God. So maybe something's missing or maybe something has never been taught.

2. Don't apply the disciplines to the neglect of appropriate responsibilities. So, like parents this week, you have responsibilities with children. You will have opportunities to participate in spiritual disciplines but you can't do it to the neglect of responsibilities.

So, what I was to do as we close is show this list one more time, both of them side by side. Those of abstinence and those of engagement. I want you to look at this and I just want you... This is between you and the Lord right now. Which one are you neglecting. Which one maybe you just learned about

for the first time. You've never considered it. You are going to go home and you're going to study this discipline more. Obviously, we could do a twelve-part series on these spiritual disciplines. And maybe be will in the future. But what is missing?

Solitude	Study
Silence	Worship
Fasting	Celebration
Frugality	Fellowship
Secrecy	Service
Chastity	Prayer

A friend of mine went to a retreat center in Nebraska this year. It was founded, funded, and started... it was a multimillion-dollar retreat, a gorgeous facility by Joe Ricketts, one of the co-owners of the Chicago Cubs. His life was changed on a silence retreat. So, my friend spent five days at this silence retreat with a lot of other people. They all sit in the dining room together. The only rule on the campus is no talking, not one word. I don't know about you, but I would lose my mind. He's a Jayhawks fan. He said another guy walked into the dining hall with a Jayhawks shirt on. He goes, "I know I couldn't say anything but I was trying to get his attention, (pointing at the emblem on his shirt and giving him a thumbs up)." But he couldn't say a word. And he just talked about what disentangling himself from people and words and the need for communication and how it brought him to a place in his relationship with the Lord.

That's just one example of all of these when you dive into the spiritual disciplines and say, "I'm going to make this a part of my every day, ordinary, walk around life."

Some of you in here... I know who you are. I know the personalities in the room and they're going, "I wrote them all down and I'm going to do all twelve today." That's not the goal today. Let's all just take a big deep breath. I'm asking you for the plan. One or two that you've neglected, drifted from, never known about until today. You and the Lord, right now as we pray. Say, "Hey, Father, I am going to dive in with this. I need some time alone with you. I need to back up from my words. Food and wine do have their grip on me right now. I'm going to back up from that this week. I don't even know what that looks like yet, but I'm going to study it this week. I'm bringing it to you right now. I hope there is a great transformation in our church as a result of these gauges.

Father, In the name of Jesus, I pray for all of us that we would be mindful, that we would all know these spiritual disciplines, that we would know when we need them, and that we wouldn't run from them, but run to them in the moments we need that solitude, in the moments we need that secrecy, in the moments we need that silence, in the moments we need that fast. In the time of prayer and the time of worship and the time of celebration and the time of study, that all of these would be just richer in our lives because of our focus on them. We want a church that is full, and people who are full and well, so we can be about your agenda and you're kingdom.

We pray all of this in the authority of the name of Jesus, and everyone agreed and said... Amen.