



Personal Disciplines

Matthew 6 & Mark 1

Big Idea: How to Get Absolute Confidence God is with You.

Bottom Line: Planned giving and praying are two things God uses to grow your faith.

Review:

What if God really existed, and what if you had perfect faith in him?

What if you were absolutely confident God was with you – every step you took?

Humanity's problems began when we quit trusting God.

When trust was broken, the relationship was broken, and sin followed.

The entire Old and New Testament is a story of God saying, "Trust Me."

Christianity is an invitation to reenter a relationship of trust with God the Father.

Five Things God Uses to Grow Your Faith

1. Practical Teaching
2. Wholesome Relationships
3. Personal (spiritual) Disciplines
4. Servant Ministry
5. Challenging Circumstances

Introduction:

Today, I'm talking about the "D" word – Discipline.

Sometimes, disciplines become addictions and obsessions.

Sometimes, disciplines become a hobby, as with musicians.

Disciplines are almost always a nuisance, like dieting.

But ... some disciplines are so rewarding, they become habits, like dinner home every night with the family, studying, reading, eating better.

Discipline is a bad word with good results.

It's usually done with a bit of drudgery or obligation.

Here are five things we know about discipline:

1. Discipline results in progress.
2. Discipline results in freedom.
3. Discipline results in a good feeling.
4. Discipline is beneficial.
5. Discipline us always delayed gratification.

Growing your faith requires discipline. You have to exercise your faith muscles.

The disciplines we're talking about today is giving God the first minutes of your day and the first dollars of your income. Here, Jesus talks about prioritizing your time and money around His Kingdom.

Truth:

Read Matthew 6:1-6 and Mark 1:35.

Giving money stretches your faith because it means letting go of the very thing you trust in rather than God.

Giving is the most tangible means of swapping your dependence.

Then, Jesus changes focus from money to prayer.

We're not talking about your "as you go through the day" prayers. We're talking about intentional, get alone, quiet prayers – the kind we don't have time for because we're so busy with everything else.

He connects both giving and prayer to rewards.

What if you believed this?

What if you believed God takes your giving and prayers seriously?

What if you really believed God rewards your giving and prayer time?

Prayer is an expression of dependence.

Seeking God first with time and money breathes life into your spirit.

Conclusion:

Giving exposes your faith. Praying informs your faith.

Each is a way God develops your faith.

Your heavenly Father is most honored by your faith, and He is committed to growing it.

These are two ways to work with him in this lifelong process, giving and prayer.

There are times when you will not feel like doing either of these. I get that. That's why they're disciplines.

So, commit to tithing (giving the first ten percent of your income) and praying for a month, and keep track of your thoughts and feelings. You'll learn a lot and grow your faith in the process.

Application & Next Steps:

- Memorize Matthew 6:3-4, 6.
- Pastor, I accept the one-month tithe challenge.
- Pastor, I accept the one-month prayer challenge.