

PRESCRIPTION FOR A DULL SPIRITUAL LIFE

Senior Pastor Keith Stewart

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Is your spiritual life not what it used to be? Has the fire gone out? The hunger you once felt for the things of God, is it growing or has your appetite been diminished? Believe it or not, people experience dullness in their spiritual life for very predictable reasons. It doesn't have to be that way. On Sunday (June 2), Pastor Keith will walk us through the root causes of spiritual dullness and explain God's prescription for a growing, vital, and life-giving connection to Christ. This may be the most important message you will hear this year.

Salvation by minimal entrance requirements

"If people do not hear your presentation of the gospel and naturally ask the follow-up question, 'how do I now apprentice under Jesus,' then whatever you are preaching is not the gospel of Jesus." - Dallas Willard

"...a two-tier church..." - Peter Scazzero

"63% of people who self-identify as Christian."
- Pew Research (January 14, 2021)



Most people who profess to be Christians are not following Jesus.

Jesus didn't invite people to convert to a new religion called Christianity. He never once even used the word Christian. The New Testament barely uses it at all. Jesus invited people to apprentice under Him.

Did you know that the word "disciple" occurs 269 times in the New Testament? On the other hand, the word "Christian" is only found 3 times in the Bible.

"...the church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose." - C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

1. LIVING ACCORDING TO LIFE'S SACRED RHYTHM

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured,

and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all. Luke 6.12-19

From solitude (time alone with God)
to community (vital relationships that sustain us)
to service (which is how we care for others)

communion, community, co-working
our desert, our group and our project
loving God, loving one another, loving our neighbors
grow, connect, serve

GROW – Love God

"In the spiritual life, the word 'discipline' means the effort to create some space in which God can act." – Henri Nouwen

Spiritual growth is effortful.

Inward: meditation, fasting, study, and prayer
Outward: simplicity, solitude, submission, and service
Corporate: confession, worship, guidance, and celebration

"disciplines of engagement" and "disciplines of abstinence"

CONNECT – Love One Another

Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst. Matthew 18.20



"Personalities united can contain more of God and sustain the force of His presence than scattered individuals."

- Dallas Willard

SERVE – Love Your Neighbor

2. DEVELOPING A PERSONAL RULE OF LIFE

What is a rule of life?

"Very few of us have a plan to be with Jesus, and thoughtfully apprentice under him." - John Mark Comer

"A Rule of Life, very simply, is an intentional, conscious plan to keep God at the center of everything we do."

- Pete Scazzero

Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. Romans 12.1-2 (Message)

"There is nothing else. Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life in our day. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life." – Dallas Willard

"Amid our busy schedules, we're constantly juggling relationships and responsibilities and often feel like we're dropping more balls than we're keeping in the air. When we lack a consistent and thoughtful way of doing life well, we will end up distracted and overwhelmed by life, and our spiritual and emotional growth will plateau. Few of us want to take this approach to life, but it just seems to happen." - Jeremy Linneman

"A good rule can set us free to be our true and best selves. It is a working document, a kind of spiritual budget, not carved in stone but subject to regular review and revision. It should support us, but never constrict us." - John Mark Comer

"How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives." - Annie Dillard

"Our phones—and their programmers—are happy to set our habits for us. They would love to speak the first words of the day, and they usually do. Our phones—and whatever has come through them—thus shape the first desires of the morning and order our first prayers for us." - Justin Whitmel Earley, *The Common Rule*

"(Technology) must never be accepted as part of the natural order of things... Every technology is a product of a particular economic and political context and carries with it a program, an agenda, and a philosophy that may or may not be life-enhancing and that therefore requires scrutiny, criticism, and control." - Neil Postman, *Technopoly*

I will not be mastered by anything. 1 Corinthians 6.12

- ❑ How do we develop a rule of life?

“Upstream” and “Downstream” Practices

All relationships are built with the same currency: time and undivided attention.

My rule of LIFE:

Rest – Receive - Receptivity - Reciprocate - Reconnect

- ❑ What's the true metric for success?

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. John 15.11

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Richard Swenson in his book Margin talks about many different kinds of overload. From the list below, which of these forms feel the most relevant to you right now?

- Activity overload
- Change overload
- Choice overload
- Commitment overload
- Debt overload
- Expectation overload
- Information overload
- Media overload
- Noise overload
- Fatigue overload



Guide the group through the following prayer exercise. Close your eyes and spend a minute or two in silence, calling to mind some kind of image that represents the limit that you are struggling to accept. Now, imagine Jesus walking up to you. Slowly imagine yourself handing Him that object, and with it, your finiteness in that area. How does He respond? Take some time in silence imagining His response.

2. What practices have you adopted, presently or in the past, to facilitate life with God? Which were "upstream" (challenging, but good for you) and which were "downstream" (easy for you and your personality)? What time of day and what space works best for you to spend time alone with God?
3. What current habits in your life are moving you toward the goals of being with, becoming like, and doing what Jesus does? What current habits and rhythms are getting in the way? What is one daily rhythm that you're excited about adding? What is one weekly rhythm that you know you need to add?
4. The three spheres of spiritual growth or what Pastor Keith referred to as Christ's sacred rhythm, are growing, connecting and serving. It's time to do a spiritual check-up. Where are you strongest and where are you weakest? In what ways did today's message challenge you to devote more time to the area where you have room for growth?

5. The spiritual disciplines are all various ways of creating space for God in your life. Which disciplines have you tried and what has been your experience? Which ones have you never tried? How has God met you during your engagement with the spiritual disciplines?

RESOURCES

BOOK - Practicing the Way by John Mark Comer

For more information on developing a rule of life and use of the spiritual disciplines
(<https://www.practicingtheway.org>)

Two booklets – How to Un-hurry and Rule of Life can be downloaded from Springcreek's Resource webpage
(<https://www.springcreekchurch.org/resources>)

Pastor Keith's prior teaching on spiritual growth can be heard on YouTube here:

(<https://www.youtube.com/@RealSpringcreekChurch>)
In particular, listen to the following series, The Way, Rooted, Discipleship, Prayer, Ghost.

