



Spiritual Disciplines Toolbox

09 Unplugging

“Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”
— Moses, Psalm 90:12

What are Spiritual Disciplines?

At some point we all get stale, stuck, or start searching for more. Most often all we need is the right tool to break through in our relationship with God. Spiritual disciplines are the biblical tools Christians have been using for centuries to draw closer to God. We use the disciplines because we need help, not because we are so holy. Experiment with the tools to find out what helps you connect with God the best.

What is Unplugging all about?

Life is a string of moments. It is a car ride followed by an appointment. A meeting and then working on a project. Life is busy schedules, housework, and an evening trying to catch up. What we might describe as boring, God describes as a rare gift. Add these moments together and you have an hour, a day, and eventually—a lifetime. The secret to a full life is numbering one's days. These moments are not infinite. Every second is precious. When we value them, we find ourselves cherishing the mundane and making the most of every encounter.

Jesus was always seizing these moments for eternity. Wherever we look we see Jesus chatting with an outcast by a well (John 4:1-38) or stopping in the press of a crowd to engage the hopeless (Luke 8:43-48). He notices the overlooked (John 5:1-15), He shares a meal with the moral outcasts (Matt. 9:9-13), the hated (Luke 19:1-10) and speaks life to the guilty (John 8:1-11). Can you imagine Jesus texting Peter by the well that day and leaving the woman lost in her marathon of broken hearts? Jesus is never distracted by momentary diversions. Imitate Christ, and you will discover a world of significant opportunity you never knew existed.

Where do I start?

Detox. Whether it's for the first five minutes or five hours of your day, refusing to check your digital devices before you meet with God is one of the most powerful decisions you can make. Set a goal for yourself each morning or evening to allow God in before the extra junk threatens to crowd Him out. Do this throughout the day by pausing a song and spending time listening to God or by turning off your phone while you go for a walk with Him. Also, try charging your device in another room at night so you can spend your last moments before sleep with the God of the universe.

What other ways can I use this tool?

Unplug. It is insane how little time we spend in quality interaction with others. We spend an average of 7.5 hours staring at screens. When we finally get together with others, we keep getting pulled away from anything meaningful by checking our devices. We are up on everything going on with all of our friends except for the one in the room with us! Create a real space for quality time together by stashing your phone in another room when hanging out with friends and family.

Declutter. Sometimes the things we own end up owning us. Pick a couple areas where you can break the grip of stuff on your life. Reduce the number of gadgets or clean out closets. Give things away or have fun filling up the trash. See if you are not happier with less.

Upgrade. It's easy to text, but it is far less meaningful than a phone conversation. An email is faster, but a written letter is better. Why not upgrade your interactions to deepen your relationships? The next time you are going to text, call instead. If you were planning to call, find a way to hang out. When you want to hang out, decide to go out somewhere new. By choosing to upgrade your interactions, you'll be upgrading the quality of your relationships.

Retreat. Get time away for a few hours, half a day, or even a full day. Go somewhere away from the distractions like a park or retreat center. Take a Bible, journal, or Christian book. Fight through the boredom to find God. Let it take time. Capture what you are thinking and learning in your notebook. Come back refreshed and with your head cleared.

“Men have become the tools of their tools.”

— Henry David Thoreau