

As all of you know, I'm a pastor. I've been a Christian for ~25 years. And, I've either been in educational training or been a pastor for ~23 of those years. Along the way, in my faith journey, in addition to the Bible, I've had the personal blessing of reading many great Christian books. And, one of my top favorites of ALL TIME is *The Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* by Richard Foster. [Show pic.](#)

I first read this book ~5 years into ministry (2005). The reason I loved it so much is... I was spiritually out of shape! I was weekly writing sermons and preaching. But, on the inside, I was struggling in my personal, daily walk and relationship with Jesus Christ. After asking a friend, he recommended this book. It seriously helped me understand how to daily deny myself, take up my cross, and follow Jesus as His disciple.

Which brings me to today and our new life lesson series, ["CrossFit"](#). CrossFit is a very popular method in our culture to get into physical shape. But, my goal in this series is to get us, Jesus' disciples, into "spiritual shape". You may sit there and think, "I don't need it!". But, in all actuality, you really, really do! The path to spiritual growth, to become a disciple of Jesus, takes some discipline. But, it's well worth it!

This morning, let me paint a picture of the next three months (90 days). During July, starting next Sunday, we'll learn the four [Inward Disciplines: Meditation, Prayer, Fasting, and Study](#). During August,

we'll learn the four Outward Disciplines: Simplicity, Solitude, Submission, and Service. And, during September, we'll learn the four Corporate Disciplines: Confession, Worship, Guidance, and Celebration.

Along the way, we'll create some new habits, be called to obedient living in a sin-racked world, completely rely on the Holy Spirit's help, and place ourselves in the way/Way of Christ, inviting Him to work in our daily lives. Richard Foster says, "God has given us the Disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of receiving His grace. The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that He can transform us."

So, join us for the next 90 days for "CrossFit: The Path to Spiritual Growth". Know that the desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep, daily disciples of Jesus. And, remember, Richard Foster's words, "The spiritual disciplines' purpose is not to make life miserable but joyful, not to put us into bondage, but to set us free, not to confine, but to liberate us."

Let's pray, Lord, Hebrews 5:14-6:1a (ESV) says, "Solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity." Lord, I can't echo these words in our lives loud enough. Lord, by Your will and not our will, help us, as Your disciples, to go on to maturity in our faith!