

Sermon on the Mount - Devotion

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[0 : 00] So tonight we are continuing our study on the Sermon on the Mount. This is our diagram guiding us through the Sermon.

This is our title, Disciples Trained by King Jesus. That's what the Sermon on the Mount is. It's training for discipleship. And that's what we want to be, disciples who have been trained and taught and shaped and instructed by our amazing King, Jesus Christ.

Tonight we are focusing on 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, box number 9, which is entitled Devotion. And we will read again, verse 16 to 18.

When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they just figure their faces that they're fasting may be seen by others. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that you're fasting may not be seen by others, but by your Father who is in secret.

Your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Now in these verses, Jesus is looking at the specific example of fasting. But as we've seen and as we read when we were reading the larger passage, this is the third of three examples that Jesus is using to highlight the importance of having the right motivation as disciples.

[1 : 22] Remember, all the way back in verse 1, he says, beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you'll have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Jesus is emphasizing the importance of not being motivated by the opinion of men and women around us, but by being concerned for what God sees and for what God wants.

So the main principle he's setting out here is motivation. He then gives three examples to illustrate his point and these are giving to the needy prayer and fasting.

And in all of these examples, he is teaching us that as disciples, our concern is first and foremost what God wants and what God thinks and what God sees.

As a vital, vital part of discipleship, vital part of our personal lives as Christians, a vital part of our church life, that we are not so much worried about people, that we are worried and concerned about God.

It's his opinion that matters and it is him that we want to please, not to impress people around us. And Jesus has highlighted that that includes the secret areas of our lives, the areas where nobody else can see but God.

[2 : 45] And as we said, that's where the real test of discipleship is. Sometimes when other people are watching, we can behave at our best, but when nobody can see us except God, that's where our discipleship is really tested.

So the main point that Jesus is making is in regard to motivation, that was one of our boxes. But as we have seen, in giving this teaching regarding motivation, Jesus is also giving us some wonderful additional teaching, particularly in the area of prayer.

And we spent three weeks looking at the disciples prayer because it's a wonderful prayer for us to pray as disciples. Tonight I want us to think more generally in terms of our devotional life and then to focus on one particular area.

Because our devotional life is a vital part of discipleship and the area that we're going to focus on is also something that we must consider, but yet it's something that we don't talk about that much.

So what's Jesus saying in regard to our devotional life? Well, first of all, he is saying that in his three examples, these are areas that he expects to be part of our lives as disciples.

[4 : 03] Notice he says, when you give the knee, when you pray and when you fast. Not if, when. He is telling us that he's expecting these things to be a normal part of life as a disciple.

And the first two seem very, very straightforward because they are something that I think come naturally to us. As disciples, we must always give to those who are in need. That's a vital, vital part of discipleship.

It's a key distinguishing feature of the Christian church that we give to those who are in need. And the New Testament is full of commands to help the poor.

James, the whole letter of James is particularly concerned with this area. These verses here highlight the point. If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and filled without giving them the things needed for the body.

What good is that? As Christians, we are to give to those who are in need. And that is the primary job of who? Who in the church has got the primary job for doing that?

[5 : 24] What is that? That's top of the list of the job description for a certain part of the church. Any ideas? That's the decos course, number one job.

Helping people in need. That's what decos are for. That's why they were appointed in the first place. That's what our decos course should be primarily concerned.

A decos course is not primarily concerned with improving our resources. A decos course is primarily concerned with sharing our resources. I have to say this is a very, very, very, very, generous communication.

I'll sit down for a minute and tell me what the midweek collections were for the year. We collect on a Thursday night for a different thing each month. It's amazing how much has come from a small group.

Combined together, it's over £3,000 for the year. Over four. That's amazing. Absolutely amazing. A sincere thanks to everybody who has contributed to that.

[6 : 46] We have a very, very generous foundation. That's what a decos course is for. People think what's a decos course for? Helping the needy. This raises a really important point. Sometimes we can be very weary of this.

Social gospel. We hear that word and we think, ooh, that's a liberal thing. Churches who aren't very theologically sound focus on.

Sometimes that can be the case. You have congregations who have maybe moved away from biblical authority, who have maybe got a much, much, much looser approach to scripture and the church government that we would be comfortable with, but they nevertheless maintain a very, very, very strong focus on helping people who are needy.

Now, it is a danger that that kind of social gospel, helping people in need, it's a danger that that could take over and replace our theology and our evangelism and our worship.

That should never happen. But God forbid that our love for theology leaves us neglecting the needs of people who are around us.

[8 : 07] We must always do all that we can for help. Theology and social care is not an either or. It's a both and. We must always seek to help.

Disciples give to the needy as a vital part of discipleship. But Jesus makes the point that we must not make a show of that. When you give to the needy, don't sound your trumpet, don't boast about it, don't try to impress people.

It's between ourselves and God. Now, of course, other people may know, for example, a treasure will know if a particular donation comes in or something like that.

Jesus is not saying that giving must be utterly anonymous, but the point is that it must not be unnecessarily broadcast. Again, the priority is what God sees and what God thinks.

So as disciples, we should all give to the needy. As disciples, we should all pray. And that's, of course, very obvious. We've been looking at that over the last few weeks. Donnie.

[9 : 08] Before you go into prayer, when you're giving to the needy, are you, is that part of your time of separate from your time? I would say, in an ideal world, part of your time.

I would say, but through the church, in an ideal world, everybody would type, give a tent to the church. If anybody gave a tent to the church, the church would have way more resources than it has, and it would be able to do far more than it does for the needy and for others.

Some people have different approaches to this, and it's very difficult because right now the church doesn't have the resources, so giving direct to something else might make something happen more quickly and more effectively.

For 1800 years, 1850 years, there was no such thing as a welfare state. It was all through the church.

There was no such thing as charities. It was all through the church. We live in a kind of age which has changed in that regard, that charity has become detached from the church.

[10 : 20] In an ideal world, we would all type to the church, and part of that would be to support those who are in need. But if you can give on top of that to other people, then you're better.

What I was thinking of was, when you're calculating your type, that's the first thing. Yes. The third tonight, do you include it as part of the tenth, or would you see that as a second thing that is going to the needy and to the mission?

I think you could look at it either way. I would have no objection to somebody who said that my third tonight giving was part of that type, because that's been given to the church, it's been given to the Lord.

Anything would be given to God. Yes, absolutely. Everything that you give for God's cause can be seen as part of your type.

You could, for example, give a twentieth to the church and give another twentieth to a direct missionary organisation. That's still for the Lord's work, it's still for the church at large.

[11 : 23] In terms of how we function as a denomination though, it would mean that as a denomination we could do more if the tithe came through us, and through the church went to other missionary organisations.

It depends how we want to do it. For example, the free church has had to pull back a lot of international mission, because we don't have the money for it.

But I'm sure a lot of people still give directly to international mission, but it depends how you want to do it. The more that gets given directly, the less the free church can do. The more that goes to the free church, the more the free church can do.

It depends on good management, good stewardship, good planning. The most important thing is to be willing and ready to give to the needy. That's a good thing.

As I said, the people here are wonderfully generous. Prayer, yep, we pray. We've looked at that in the past few weeks, so I won't go over it again.

[12 : 28] Just a reminder that every single day we pray to our Father. Both Angus and Neil in their prayers spoke about how we're a family. As a family, we come together to pray.

As a family, we pray to our Father who knows us, who hears us, who never, never stops listening. Looking ahead into 2018, it would just be wonderful if we could just be more and more and more and more and more.

A people who pray and pray and pray. But again, Jesus says that's not to make a name for ourselves. It is because we need God and because we want to pray to Him.

So should we give to the needy? Yes. Should we pray? Yes. Should we fast? What is he saying? When?

Exactly. We always want to be consistent in our hermeneutics. Remember the word hermeneutics?

[13 : 36] I might not be able to spell it right. Hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is how we interpret scripture. So when you read any passage of the Bible, you have to interpret that.

For example, when Jesus says, I am the door, he doesn't mean he's one of them things, made of wood with a handle. And I think Jesus, it's an image. You have to interpret it appropriately.

It's important that hermeneutics are consistent in any given passage. So when you give the needy, yeah, when you pray, yes, we have to apply the same principle to verse 16.

The only answer that we can give to the question, should we fast, is... Yes.

Why don't we? Well, this is what we're going to talk about tonight. This is what we're going to talk about. And the rest of the New Testament echoes this very clearly.

[14 : 40] Disciples of John came to Jesus saying, we fast, and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples don't. Jesus says, as long as I'm with them, as long as the bridegroom is there, they won't fast.

The days are coming when the bridegroom is taken away from them. Then they will fast. Of course, he's talking about the days that we live in. Acts 13, they were Antioch, Barnabas was there, Simeon, Lucius, Manaian, and Saul, while they were worshipping the Lord.

And fasting, the Holy Spirit said, set apart Barnabas and Saul. After fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them.

Verse 14, after they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

So, I think it is unquestionable that our devotional life should include fasting.

[15 : 43] Now, it's very easy to come to an issue like this and try to think of reasons why we can't or why we shouldn't fast. John Stott has written an excellent commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, he says that many Christians live their lives as if these verses had been torn out of the Bible, because it's something that many of us don't do.

And we might smile at that, but that's a really easy thing to do. And we should always ask ourselves the question, are there parts of the Bible that we quietly ignored? Are there parts of the New Testament that we quietly pretend aren't there?

We're not going to elaborate on that, but that's a question we should all ask ourselves. Fasting is one area where we can easily block our ears to what Jesus is saying, I don't know how to do that, I'm not really going to do that.

But in reality, as disciples, we should listen to what Jesus says. When you fast, and so that means that for all of us, there should be a when you fast in our lives.

And that's not something radical or new, that's actually something that has been very much part of the Reformed church, which we claim to be a part of. What is the statement of faith of the Three Churches of Scotland?

[17 : 12] Confession of faith. Confession of faith? Does the Confession say anything about fasting? Certainly does. Sorry, not there. Here we are. This is talking about worship.

The reading of scriptures with Godly fear, the sound preaching, and the con-tionable hearing of the word. In obedience unto God with understanding faith and reverence, singing of the Psalms with grace in the heart, as also the due administration and receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God, besides religious oaths, vows, solemn fastings and thanksgivings upon special occasions, which are, in their several times and seasons, to be used in a holy and religious manner.

So fasting, Westminster Confession of Faith, absolutely, historically, biblically, ecclesiology, at the heart of what we do, what we believe, and what our church is all about.

It also says religious oaths. What do we do religious oaths? When you became an elder. It's not very. Possibly actually, yes. I can't remember what the distinction between an oath and a vow is between a...

The Westminster Confession makes a distinction between an oath and a vow. I can't actually remember what that is. What about the baptism of the Lord? An oath, a vow.

[18 : 47] I'm not sure what we would call the difference between those two. And usually we're compared to those vows. They usually are compared to those vows. That's one for the question box, Donnie.

The difference between an oath and a vow in the Westminster Confession. I'll have to look that up because I can't remember. Back in the 17th century when this was written, it was common to...

A common feature of spiritual life was covenanting. Now, I don't mean the covenant, Dirk. I mean covenanting. I mean that people would make a covenant with God in the sense that they would...

They would vow that they would faithfully attend the means of grace whenever they could. They would serve in every way they could. They would abstain from something. And they would take it so seriously, they would describe it in terms of a covenant with God.

Something that's sort of drifted out of life. That's maybe what they mean by religious oaths. I'm wondering if the oaths maybe refer to the oaths of loyalty that were taken to King and country and things like that.

[19 : 50] Could be, again, I'd have to check. I can't remember. I should remember that, but I can't. Isn't it a no-through office that one takes in Parliament and so on?

I think... Now, let me think now, actually. I think if I remember rightly, this might not be right, so don't quote me. One of these, I think, is to God.

One of them is to fellow man. I think that's the distinction. Don't quote me on that, but I think that that's the distinction of the confession.

That one, an oath between us and God, a vow is in front of others. So, for example, marriage vows is before God, but it's to your wife, an oath.

That's bringing it out, but I'll check. Does it not say some pre-opera vows now to the Lord? Yes, again, that would be slightly different, because that's the scriptural term of our vow, which will be possibly another use in a different way.

[21 : 01] So, I love salvation. Take the cup. I'll pay my vows now to the Lord. Again, the words oath vows are kind of interchangeable.

It might be that oath is to one another and vows is to God. I can't remember, which is terrible, but I'll have to look that up and I will check it. We're getting distracted because it's fasting.

We want to talk about it. So, it's in the Bible. It's in the Westminster's The Confession of Aesopheic that Marcella asks the vital question of why don't we do it.

And here, I think, a really, really, really important point is being raised. We are studying the Sermon on the Mount because we want to be disciples who are trained by King Jesus.

If we want to be disciples trained by King Jesus, there's one thing that we've got to be ready for. What do you think that is?

[22 : 12] We've got to be ready to change. In the sense that if Jesus is teaching, not just in the Sermon on the Mount, but in any part of Scripture, if it highlights something that's maybe a miss in their lives, we have got to be ready to change.

Either to change our thinking or to change our habits. As disciples, we have got to be ready to stop doing things that we've maybe always done.

We've got to be ready to start doing things that we have never done. Because if you say, I don't need to change, what do you say?

You're saying, I am, I have, and none of us, I know, want to say that.

Psycletonship, repentance means changing. It means being ready to grow. It means being trained. We want to be trained. Training means changing. It means growing. It means learning. It means maturing.

[23 : 29] And we want to be trained by Jesus. We want to be teachable. And maybe, maybe we all need to be taught by Jesus about fast.

And I have to hold my hands up and say, I certainly do. Because I've never fasted. I've been a Christian for 20 years. I've never fasted.

The only thing I've done that resembled a fast was, as a teenager, I used to go to a Bible study and we agreed to not watch TV for a week. And so that was, that was the only thing I've ever done equivalent to a fast.

I've never done it in regard to food. And that's why when I read that, I think, yeah, I give to the needy and you must give to the needy. Yeah, I pray and you must pray. And then I go to verse 16 and I say to myself, oh.

Because I've never done it. And if I'm going to be a sermon on the Mount Disciple, then I need to change.

[24 : 42] As a curc session, have we ever discussed fasting? Not in my time. And if not, Jesus is teaching us that that needs to change. As a congregation, have we ever had a solemn fasting like that which the confession of faith speaks about?

As far as I know, we haven't. Well, that should change. And as individuals, do we fast? Now, some of you might, and I don't in any way want to pry into that because as this is all emphasising, that's between you and God.

But I, all I can talk about is myself. I say, I have to hold my hands up and say, I need to change. I need to start. Wasn't the Thursday of the Communion always referred to as a fast day?

It was referred to as a fast day, which I don't know what the history of that is. I'd love to know. I'd love to know. Because obviously it would have been a fast day. It would have been, it's turned into the day where we eat loads of places.

But wouldn't it be brilliant if it was the fast day? You're an elder Donnie. Raise it up the curc session. March, fast day on Thursday. Well, that would be something that would be up to the elders, but it's something to discuss, something to think about.

- [25 : 58] Because that's a very practical example as to how this kind of thing should be done. So why didn't the church here or in the island or elsewhere, over the last 100 years since the disruption, when they even had a day of fasting assigned in the Communion?
- Why did we never, I don't remember ever, I remember here. I know why I did. I don't remember ever seeing fasting. That's exactly the point Donnie. Why don't we do it? Why don't we do it? Why are there parts of the New Testament that we ignore?
- So we ask the question, why do we pray? Why do we fast? Marcel, you're a genius. That's the very next thing I'm going to say in my notes. It says, all this raises a question, why should we fast?
- So why should we fast? What's fasting all about? Well, fasting is a clear biblical principle. You go back to the Old Testament, you'll see that fasting is a common practice, but it was something that was done at particular times.
- And a very close association is made between fasting and praying. And it would appear that fasting is to function as an aid to prayer. It's very much associated with prayer.
- [27 : 08] Here are some examples of situations that prompted fasting. Nehemiah, he was mourning, a time of mourning and distress. I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of Heaven.
- Daniel gives us a plea for mercy. I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and please for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. And I said, well, repentance and 1 Samuel 7, the people came before the Lord and fasted and said, we've sinned against the Lord.
- Fasting is associated with humility and humbling ourselves. Esther, I proclaimed a fast there that we might humble ourselves before our God.
- And fasting is also associated with an impending challenge or threat. Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, go gather all the Jews to be found in Suza and hold a fast on my behalf.
- And do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young woman will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.
- [28 : 19] And remember, we had two examples in Acts. They were both associated with appointing and preparing people for service.
- New elders, prayer and fasting for selecting and appointing them for their work. Now, it's interesting to note, all of these things are regular experiences for the Christian.
- We have times of mourning. We ask for mercy from God for ourselves or others. We need to repent regularly. We want to humble ourselves. We face challenges and threats.
- And here we are seeing that all of these things, these are the big things that we face, aren't they? There's kind of a very comprehensive emphasis here. You've got mistakes in the past, struggles in the present, challenges in the future.
- They're big, big, big things that we face. Regular things, but big things. And it seems to be the case that the Bible is saying these are the times when you should fast.
- [29 : 24] When we face the big challenges of discipleship, the Bible is telling us to fast. When we had a day of prayer, for example, shouldn't we have had a day of fasting prayer?
- When that was originally appointed at the General Assembly, it was appointed to be a day of prayer and fasting. If we just sort of ignore the fasting bit, as we tend to do.
- Here's a good quote from John Stott. Again, if you ever see a copy of John Stott's book in the Sermon on the Mount, well worth buying, in fact anything that John Stott writes is good. He's very, very, very good.

The evidence is plain that special enterprises, sorry, that should say is not if, the evidence is plain that special enterprises need special prayer. And that special prayer may well involve fasting.

But what difference does it make if we do fast? Does it help? Does it make anything? Well, fasting does not guarantee that we get what we want. You may remember in 2nd Samuel 12, when David's child was born and was facing death, David fasted for the child to recover, but it didn't happen.

[30 : 37] The child died. So fasting is not to kind of bribe God with their piety. The key point is that like everything else that God tells us to do, this is something that will do us good.

Everything that God tells us to do will do us good. Every command of God is for our good. And there's many ways I think that this would benefit us.

I just want to highlight two. Fasting involves stopping, in particular involves stopping eating. And I think that our culture, anything that makes us stop and think is a good thing.

Because life is so brisk and bonkers and chaotic and intense. If we stopped eating for a day, then it would make us all slow down and focus on the Lord.

And that can only be a good thing. But I think the second thing, why this is good for us, and I think this is the main point, fasting is an exercise in self-discipline.

[31 : 48] Because by fasting, we are denying ourselves. We are exercising self-control and self-discipline. And an absolutely fundamental part of being a disciple is self-control.

It's very easy to think that the grace of God and the freedom that we now have as Christians means that we don't need to make any effort. But that can make us become lazy as disciples.

The Bible makes it clear that discipleship involves effort. We want to exercise self-discipline, self-denial, self-control. And of course, that should make perfect sense to us because self-discipline is controlling ourselves.

We want to control ourselves because we know that our instincts as sinners are not always good, are not always what they want to be, and we still battle between the flesh and the spirit within us.

Self-discipline is absolutely vital as a disciple. Self-discipline is self-denial.

[32 : 55] If you think about it, everything in life that really is good, really good, involves self-discipline. A marriage is a wonderful thing, but it involves self-discipline.

Parenting is a wonderful thing, but that involves self-discipline in order to give of your time for your child. Being successful at work involves self-discipline.

You've got to work hard. Learning anything, being educated involves self-discipline. You've got to grind your way through studying and learning, but all of these things do us good. And perhaps the clearest example is exercise.

If you want to get fit, you need self-discipline. And as disciples, we want to get fit spiritually, and that of course requires self-control, self-denial, self-discipline.

Now just like with physical exercise, getting fit doesn't happen like that. It takes time. And as we build ourselves up bit by bit, we want to focus more and more on the Lord and to be shaped more and more by His Word.

[34 : 09] We often, we talk about fasting and we kind of think, ooh, yes. I had to go for a blood test the other day. I had to fast. I will fast for the nourish. Why not for the Lord?

And so I think that's something that we must, must do. We must fast. The Muslims do that in the month of Ramadan. They don't eat during Day-Ladah. They don't eat during Day-Ladah.

Well the challenge of Ramadan is actually that the Muslim calendar follows a slightly different programme to ours. And so every year it moves back a wee bit, a bit like a tide, you know, it moves every day.

So at the moment Ramadan is something like May, which if you live in Lewis, is very difficult because it's dark. It's only dark between 11 and 4 in the morning. So they don't have long to eat at all. So it's very, very challenging for them.

The Jews do as well. The Jews do as well? Christians do as well? Well, yes. Yes, we did. Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. I'm not curious about the Lord telling the disciples how to pray, yet maybe you have another one under your cover, or your steam or whatever.

[35 : 35] But what are the instructions for how to fast? I mean the process of how to pray and what to pray for do we fast by not eating?

Here's my notes. Here's the next question. How should we fast? Fantastic. Geniuses. Brilliant. Absolutely brilliant.

I don't know if that's... How should we fast? How should we fast? Well, the main point that Jesus is making is that how we fast should not be to oppress other people.

And that's the main point that he's making. Rather than the specifics of what we do or don't do, the main point is not to do it in a way that can be seen.

Now, there's an interesting point here, because in the Old Testament fasting was quite obvious. Sacroth, ashes, fasting, people could see it. In the New, Jesus is telling us to be more discreet about it.

[36 : 36] And I think that's maybe tied into the fact that the emphasis in the New Covenant era is on inward and outward obedience, that God's love would be written on our hearts.

Now, in terms of the details of how... I think that the Bible doesn't set out anything clear. It doesn't say it must be for 24 hours. It doesn't say it must be during the day. It doesn't say you can eat but not drink or drink but not eat.

And I think that there's complete liberty as to how you would do that. You could do it for a morning. You could take... Miss Amil, you could do it for a day. You could drink or not drink.

I think just Godly wisdom in that situation. If you're going to put yourself at risk of dehydration, you should drink. Or a headache.

Yeah, exactly. If you were a diabetic or something like that, it would be foolish to do something that would risk it. But in a situation like this, it's the principle that's being applied.

[37 : 35] Maybe just missing Amil, maybe just having simple food for a day, rather than the usual amount of meat. I think that there's liberty to apply it according to your own wisdom.

But it's interesting, back in Acts... When you look at this verse, it's easy to think that God is saying, when you fast, it should be a completely solitary thing that nobody knows.

But we have to remember, back in Acts 13, it said, they were fasting. It was something that they did as a group. So it is something that we can do together, just like prayer. It's not always in total secret. It's something that we can do together.

And Jesus is reminding us that we're not to make a show of it, but we are to do it to please our Father. So should we anoint our faith and watch our faith?

Well, anointing your head or washing your face was just a common part of... So the equivalent of that would be brush your hair and whatever you do in the morning.

[38 : 41] Brush your hair or just flatten it with your hand, that's what I do in the morning. But not to make a show of your fasting. And that of course is teaching us a lesson about devotional life in general.

Whether it's giving, praying, reading, fasting, whatever it is, must always be primarily Godward, not Manward. It is God that we want to please.

So devotional life must be Godward. Devotional life must also be sacrificial, because we want to exercise self-discipline, we want to give our resources, but others we want to make time in order to pray.

And devotional life should always be sincere. That's really the key point that Jesus is making all of these examples. There was a hypocrisy surrounding the giving and the praying and the fasting of the Pharisees and others.

Jesus and his disciples do not have that. We must be sincere. And the key point I think I want to make in it all is this, in regard to our devotional life.

[39 : 47] Devotional life is not an end in itself. We can easily think to ourselves, I want to have a really good devotional life.

And it's so easy if we think like that to slip into a kind of pious pride, where we think that we are doing something impressive and something to take pride in in terms of our devotional life.

That's exactly what Jesus is telling us to avoid. God is not a slave master who expects us to fill in a long list of devotional requirements. He is not someone that we need to try and impress with our efforts.

God is our Father. That means as disciples, our aim should not be for a great devotional life.

As disciples, our aim is to be as close to our Father as possible. And that devotional life is simply a means to that end.

[41 : 00] And that's what really matters and that's what we really want. So we don't give for the sake of giving. We don't pray for the sake of praying. We don't fast for the sake of fasting.

We do all of these things because we love our Father and we want to be near to Him. Amen.

Thank you.