

I Dare You

Less Is More - Overview

We all remember the misfit cast of characters from the Wizard of Oz. There was the wildly over-dramatic Judy Garland as Dorothy, an emotive teenager from Kansas. Along with Toto, her beloved dog, she entered a bizarre dream world of flying monkeys, cycling witches, and singing munchkins.

Fortunately, some friends came to her aid, including a kindly scarecrow, a tenderhearted lion, and a practically-minded tin man. Of course, each friend had his area of grave inadequacy. The scarecrow lacked a brain, the lion was short on courage, and the tin man was missing a heart. On the outside, each appeared fully intact. On the inside, however, each one lacked something essential. So they set out on a quest for Oz, hoping to find what would complete their characters and authenticate their lives.

The Wizard of Oz could be a parable of Christian living. All of us find ourselves stilted by sin; each of us yearns for a richer, more authentic life experience. And regardless of one's theological tradition, all mature believers come to realize that without some form of spiritual discipline our lives will continue to be empty.

Pastor and author John Ortberg describes a spiritual discipline as follows: Any activity that can help me gain power to live life as Jesus taught and modeled it.¹

This module (as well as the one before it) is designed to introduce students to the concept of spiritual disciplines, and to give them the opportunity to experiment with some specific, classical disciplines. The previous module focused on spiritual disciplines of engagement which assist us in battling sins of omission (failing to do something we should do). This module focuses on spiritual disciplines of restraint (or abstinence) which assist us in battling sins of commission (doing something we know we shouldn't do).

Both modules are designed to assist students in understanding the need for a spiritually disciplined life and to help them identify the benefits of practicing spiritual disciplines of engagement and restraint:

¹ John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), p. 48.

increased intimacy with Christ and a life that matches up more and more closely with the example of Jesus.