

I Dare You

Module: Spiritual Disciplines - Engagement

Lesson 1: Introduction to Spiritual Disciplines

Objectives:

Students will

- explore biblical and theological definitions as a basis for Christian spirituality and discipleship
- create an environment to nurture spiritual growth in one another
- develop an appreciation and love for the spiritual disciplines as a means of personal and corporate discipleship
- be challenged to commit to including spiritual disciplines in their ongoing spiritual formation
- advance their present level of discipleship

Materials Needed

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Dictionaries, paper, pens
- ☐ Nooma Video #8 “Dust” for optional introduction
- You can purchase the DVD from your local Bible bookstore, online at <http://store.flannel.org/> or for access it free from Youtube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwx2_GULUUA (pt 1) and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuXOPK2kDJs> (pt 2).

Minds On

Start this lesson by showing Rob Bell's Nooma video Dust (Nooma video #8, select one of the methods listed in the Materials Needed section to obtain this video). It is a wonderful synopsis of what it truly means to be a disciple of Jesus and is a fitting introduction to spiritual disciplines. You will need about 15 minutes to show the entire video.

Action

To begin our module on Spiritual Disciplines provide dictionaries (including online at www.dictionary.com) and split the youth into groups of two or three. Have them spend 3-5 minutes defining discipline. Come together as a group and generate a working definition that will serve as a foundation for this module. Spend a few more minutes talking about spiritual disciplines. What are they and how do they fit in to a disciplined life?

Say something like: Now, discipline usually has a negative connotation. It seems like it is some sort of punishment for being a Christian. But, the reality is that spiritual disciplines are a way of life. As Rob Bell clearly illustrates in Nooma, the task of a disciple is to do what their master does. Therefore, we engage in spiritual disciplines in order to be like Jesus.

It is important to pause for a moment and dispel a myth of discipline. Say something like: Spiritual disciplines are not a mark of spirituality. The Bible is clear that our faith is not based on works. That, of course, begs the question 'then why engages in the spiritual disciplines?'

Split your group into groups of 2-3 and have them come up with answers to that question. Give them 3-5 minutes to discuss why we should even bother with spiritual disciplines, keeping in mind the definition of disciplines that you created earlier. Come together as a group and discuss findings.

In essence, spiritual disciplines draw us into a closer relationship with Jesus. But, there is an important distinction that needs to be made in order to properly understand how we engage in them. There is a significant difference between a) trying to be more disciplined and b) training to be disciplined. Spend a

few minutes as a group discussing the difference. You can use the following passages to help explain training: Luke 6:40, 1 Cor. 9:24-26, 1 Tim. 4:7-8, 2 Tim. 3:16, Titus 2:4, Heb. 5:13-14.

Say something like: The Christian life is like a marathon. And, just as it would be nearly impossible for someone who had never trained to run a marathon, it is impossible for someone who has not trained themselves in discipline to suddenly become a disciplined person. We need to train ourselves. The reality is that we will fail as we begin to engage in spiritual disciplines. There are times when we will not pray. But, we should never feel ashamed of that. We are training ourselves in order that more and more it will be a part of who we are.

Consolidate/Debrief

Say something like: While on his own journey into spiritual disciplines, the author John Ortberg, in his book The Life You've Always Wanted, made the following statement "I already feel guilty about not reading the Bible and praying enough; the last thing in the world I want is ten other things to feel guilty about not doing." Take some time as a group to talk about this statement. Many of your students, and perhaps yourself, will agree with this statement.

Say something like: The church sometimes does an inadequate job of teaching how to be a more disciplined person. In fact, the way disciplines have often been portrayed have left the majority of Christians feeling guilty and ashamed that they are not perfect. The reality of the Christian life is far removed from that. (Editor's Note: Your church may or may not reflect the above statement. Feel free to adapt it to your appropriate context.)

End this lesson by having students recognize that this module, and life in general, is a journey that requires training and a commitment to keep moving forward despite the failures of life [for a great clip refer to the movie Meet the Robinsons... cue up the scene where Will Robinson is showing Luis the number of models that it took for his father to finally build a time machine].

Spend time closing in prayer. Along with praying for any needs in the group, pray that each student would commit to training themselves up in at least one of the disciplines that will follow in this module. Consider having the group come up with an accountability method (or partners) whereby they can meet with a peer on a regular basis to talk about how they are progressing in their commitment.