

Becoming Like Jesus- Learn and do all that He Says  
Spiritual Discipline of Learning

**Learning What He Says:**

**The spiritual discipline of learning:**

**Willard writes:**

*Today we are apt to downplay or disregard the importance of good thinking to strong faith; and some, disastrously, even regard thinking as opposed to faith. They do not realize that in so doing they are not honoring God, but simply yielding to the deeply anti-intellectualist currents of Western egalitarianism, rooted, in turn, in the romantic idealization of impulse and blind feeling found in David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and their nineteenth- and twentieth-century followers. They do not realize that they are operating on the same satanic principle that produced the “killing fields” of Cambodia, where those with any sign of education—even the wearing of glasses—were killed on the spot or condemned to starvation and murderous labor. We too easily forget that it is great thinkers who have given direction to the people of Christ in their greatest moments: Paul, John, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Wesley, to name a few. At the head of the list is Jesus Christ himself, who was and is the most powerful thinker the world has ever known.*

*Many Christians today will be surprised to learn that Isaac Watts (born 1674)—the composer of such well-known hymns as “Joy to the World,” “Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed?” “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” “Jesus Shall Reign Where’er the Sun,” and “O God, Our Help in Ages Past,” along with many others—also taught logic and wrote a widely used textbook, *Logic: The Right Use of Reason in the Inquiry After Truth*. Those hymns owe much of their power to the depth of thought they contain. That is one reason we need to return to them constantly.*

*Of logic itself Watts said,*

*The great design of this noble science is to rescue our reasoning powers from their unhappy slavery and darkness; and thus, with all due submission and deference, it offers an humble assistance to divine revelation. Its chief business is to relieve the natural weakness of the mind by some better efforts of nature; it is to diffuse a light over the understanding in our inquiries after truth. . . . [And] it renders its daily service to wisdom and virtue.*

*Bluntly, to serve God well we must think straight; and crooked thinking, unintentional or not, always favors evil. And when the crooked thinking gets elevated into group orthodoxy, whether religious or secular, there is always, quite literally, “hell to pay.” That is, hell will take its portion, as it has repeatedly done in the horrors of world history.<sup>1</sup>*

- I. Learning as a spiritual discipline:
  - a. I believe we must study all truth as all truth is God’s truth.
  - b. I believe Christians must be deep thinkers.

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<sup>1</sup> Willard, Dallas. *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ* (pp. 105-106). (Function). Kindle Edition.

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- c. Dr. Whitney writes:
  - d. *Why do many Christians live as though they've been told, "Choose you this day whom you will serve: scholarship or devotion"? I maintain that a biblically balanced Christian has both a full head and a full heart, radiating both spiritual light and heat. Christians must realize that just as a fire cannot blaze without fuel, so burning hearts are not kindled by brainless heads. We must not be content to have zeal without knowledge.*<sup>2</sup>
  - e. Further: *Does this mean we must be brilliant to be Christians? Absolutely not. But it does mean that to be like Jesus we must be learners even as He was at only age twelve, "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46). An examination of the word disciple reveals that it means to be not only a "follower" of Christ but also a "learner."*<sup>3</sup>
  - f. Richard Foster makes the same point, referring to learning as the Discipline of study.
  - g. *Many Christians remain in bondage to fears and anxieties simply because they do not avail themselves of the Discipline of study. They may be faithful in church attendance and earnest in fulfilling their religious duties and still they are not changed. I am not here speaking only of those who are going through mere religious forms, but of those who are genuinely seeking to worship and obey Jesus Christ as Lord and Master. They may sing with gusto, pray in the Spirit, live as obediently as they know how, ... and yet the tenor of their lives remains unchanged. Why? Because they have never taken up one of the central ways God uses to change us: study.*<sup>4</sup>
- II. Scripture
- a. Prov. 10:14: *The wise lay up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near.*
  - b. *The Hebrew word here means to store up like a treasure. Wise men and women love to learn because they realize that knowledge is like a precious treasure. They not only "acquire" knowledge, they "seek" it.*<sup>5</sup>
  - c. Prov. 23:12: *Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge.*

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<sup>2</sup> Donald S. Whitney, [\*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life: A Study Guide Based on the Book\*](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994), 90.

<sup>3</sup> Donald S. Whitney, [\*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life: A Study Guide Based on the Book\*](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994), 90.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1978), page 54.

<sup>4</sup> Donald S. Whitney, [\*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life\*](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), 228.

<sup>5</sup> Donald S. Whitney, [\*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life: A Study Guide Based on the Book\*](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994), 90.

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- d. Mark 12:29–31 (ESV) <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup> And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ <sup>31</sup> The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”
- e. Rom. 12:2: *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*
- f. Proverbs 9:9, “*Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.*”<sup>6</sup>
- g. 1 Timothy 4:7 (ESV)
- h. <sup>7</sup> *Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness...*
- i. Dr. Whitney makes the case that:
- j. **Learning—Essential for Increased Godliness**
- k. *How is it that we are to be transformed into Christlikeness? The Bible indicates that one of the crucial elements in the process is learning when it says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2, emphasis mine). **Growth in Godliness involves a mental renewal that cannot happen without learning. We will not grow much in Godliness if we do not know much of what it means to be Godly. We will not become more like Christ if we don’t know more of what Christ is like. The Word of God must go through our head if it’s going to change our heart and our life.***<sup>7</sup>
- l. Learning is mostly by discipline, not by accident...
- m. **Learn in a Variety of Ways**
- n. *Listen to recorded books.*
- o. *Watch Christian videotapes.*
- p. *Listen to the radio Bible teaching programs of reputable ministers.*
- q. *Arrange to dialogue meaningfully with spiritually mature Christians.*
- r. *Read the best books.*<sup>8</sup>
- s. *Listen to podcasts, youtube videos, etc*

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<sup>6</sup> Donald S. Whitney, [\*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life\*](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), 224.

<sup>7</sup> Donald S. Whitney, [\*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life: A Study Guide Based on the Book\*](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994), 91.

<sup>8</sup> Donald S. Whitney, [\*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life: A Study Guide Based on the Book\*](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994), 91.

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*t. Come to Sunday School*