



**Main Point:** Spiritual habits are fuel in our relationship with God.

**Scriptures:** Matthew 23:27-28, John 1:1-5/9-13, 1 Timothy 4:7-10

[In advance, prepare to use a candle with a lid, and a lighter.]

Tonight we are launching into a new series titled FUEL! And through this series we are going to be talking all about spiritual disciplines. Can anyone name some spiritual disciplines? [Prayer, Bible reading, worship, etc.]

There are many different spiritual disciplines that we could engage with. But instead of going through one every week and talking about how you should do this and that, and how to actually do this or that spiritual discipline, I want us to take a different approach through this series.

[I personalized this first analogy. You could make it general with “some people.”]

You see, when I was your age, I viewed these disciplines almost like chores. And that is the importance that I ascribed to them; they were only things that I *should* do, that *needed* to be done, or if I got around to doing them. And I mainly did them to keep other people happy, like if I didn't do the dishes, my parents would get mad at me and we wouldn't have anything to eat off. Or, if I didn't take the trash out, the house would stink and my parents would be mad at me. And I thought that spiritual disciplines (reading the Bible, praying, spending time with God) were kind of like that; only things I was supposed to do to please God, so that God didn't feel ignored, and so that He wouldn't be mad at me.

And when we view these disciplines, these spiritual habits as chores, it makes them more difficult and less meaningful. It just becomes a superstitious motion that we go through so that God will give us good fortune and everything will be ok. This kind of mindset was one of the things Jesus called out in the religious leaders of His day. And for them it was following Mosaic law, that was the chore, that was priority number one above all else. For them, appearing religious and looking righteous on the outside was the most important thing, and Jesus called them out for it in...

### **Matthew 23:27-28 (NIV)**

*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.*

That was a pretty harsh review from Jesus, right?! But here's my point: just like me viewing these spiritual disciplines as a chore, the Pharisees were viewing things all wrong and placing ultimate importance on all the wrong things. So, here is the heart behind this series: I want us to view spiritual disciplines differently. Instead of seeing them as chores or things that we must do to please God, these practices should be seen as fuel in our relationship with God.

## **1. We serve a relational God**

Before we dive into what that means, we need to start at square one. We serve a relational God. God Himself, the creator of the universe, wants to be in relationship with us. The Gospel of John began by explaining this relationship in a really nice summary.

### **John 1:1-5 (NIV)**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

Then jump down to verse 9...

### **John 1:9-13 (NIV)**

*The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of*



- What’s something in your life that “fuels” you — like something that gives you energy, motivation, or focus? (Could be music, friends, sports, caffeine, etc.)
- Have you ever tried to run on “empty,” like going to practice or school tired or unprepared? How did that go?
- The message talked about how spiritual habits (like prayer, Bible reading, worship) can sometimes feel like chores. Why do you think people start to view them that way?
- Have you ever gone through the motions with God, just trying to “keep Him happy”?
- In Matthew 23:27–28, Jesus calls out the Pharisees for caring more about looking holy than being close to God. What do you think Jesus meant when He said they were “whitewashed tombs”?
- How might someone today appear “religious” on the outside but be spiritually empty on the inside?
- Read 1 Timothy 4:7–8. Paul compares spiritual training to working out physically. How do those two things relate?
- What might “training yourself to be godly” look like in your everyday life (school, sports, family, etc.)?

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