

## “How to Win at the Game of Life” (Disciplines)

1. What is the point of the board game...”Life”? How do you win?
  - Answer: Whoever gets the most money by the end of the game wins!
2. In worldly terms...how do you win in life? – Talk with your neighbor
  - Sample Answers: Power, Money, Status, A lot of Stuff, Being Remembered, Being 1<sup>st</sup>, Winning, etc.
3. In worldly terms....how do you lose in life?
  - Sample Answers: No Money, Goals not met, No Status
4. Thinking in spiritual/Christian terms....how do you win in life? – Talk with your neighbor
  - Sample Answers: Spreading the story of Christ, following God’s word, leading by example, etc., going to heaven
5. How do we lose spiritually? – HELL!!!! So, which is worse...not being rich or going to hell?????
6. Verse : 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 – Running the Race
7. As Christians we know where we want to go but we sometimes don't know how to get there. The most important part of our journey is what we do to finish it. In order to do this we have to be disciplined.
8. What does it mean to be disciplined?
  - Army defines this as **behavior** in accord with rules of conduct; behavior and order maintained by training and control
9. We must train ourselves in according to God’s word by controlling our behavior and focusing on God’s will.
10. Disciplines are not always pleasurable or easy to come by. They are a battle between the spirit and the flesh. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.
  - Today we will discuss three different disciplines that will help us when in this game of life that we are all playing at this very moment.

## I. PRAYER

1. What is prayer?
  - Possible Answers: Talking with God, Getting things you want, Helping Others.
2. Polleverywhere.com → Prayer Poll – Use your cell phones and take this poll of how often you pray.
3. Why do you think the discipline of praying is a difficult task for most people.
  - Busy schedules, forgetting, not a priority.
4. In today's world we are taught that everything is set in place and that an individual can't do anything to really change this.
5. This idea is correct. An individual, for the most part, can't change anything, but God can which is why we pray. We see this in the God's word and we see it today.
6. Luke 11:1-13 – Jesus Teaches About Prayer
7. Renewal: “They that ‘wait’ (lay it out) upon the Lord shall renew their strength” (Isaiah 40:31).
8. Release from anxiety: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God that passes all understanding shall keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7)
9. The Bible's idea of prayer is also that we may know God.” – John 15:7 (If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given to you)
10. Prayer is a communication tool with God.
11. I have a friend that loves to talk about himself during every interaction that we have. He will call me and talk for about 45 minutes about himself. Every time he calls, I have to prepare myself with a book and put something on the T.V. because it's going to be a long one. Is this a conversation....No because there is only a one way communication going on.
12. When we pray, we must also remember that we are communicating with God. We need to take time and listen. We need to think about what God would want from us and his goals for you as an individual Christian.
13. Prayer Guidelines
  1. Stay Focused – Prayer is not something you do while you are watching t.v.
  2. Thank God – Give thanks for your blessings that God has given you.

3. Be Specific – Prayer needs to be specific. Instead of thanking God for all of your blessings. Be specific about what you are thankful for.
4. Prayer should also be focused on the needs of others and not just your own.
5. Listen to God – Take time to think about what God wants from you in your everyday life.
6. Pray Continually – 1 Thess. 5:16-18
14. When I was a child my parents would always ask for me to say the prayer before the start of a meal. Each time I prayed it was the exact same prayer every single time. I didn't think about it. I just said it as quickly as I could so that I could eat. Remember that we are communicating with God and it does take some effort.
15. Jim Baird's Prayer Challenge of Three in the morning and in the evening. – 3 major challenges that you are facing that day. – Someone is you might face, a temptation you need help with, someone is sick.
  - Be SPECIFIC!!! Don't pray in generalities.
16. 3-Minute Prayer – Lets all be completely silent and pray for three minutes. Try this challenge and remember to leave time to think about what God requires of you.

## **II. Meditation**

1. What do you think of when you hear of someone meditating.
  - Someone with their legs crossed saying "UMMMMMM"
2. The root for meditation means: "To measure out." "Medicine" comes from the same root. To meditate is to "measure out," think upon, reflect, sort out, evaluate.
3. Psalm 1:2 – "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.
4. Meditation on God's word is sometimes a fancy way of saying "studying".
5. What do you do when you have to study for a test?
  - Memorize a study guide, use flash cards, read something over and over again.
6. How many of you get angry when the teacher re-words something on the test that didn't quite match up with the study guide and then you missed it. This means you weren't studying. Memorizing is not the same as studying. I can read a German textbook ten times through, but that doesn't mean I can speak German. To learn German, I would have to think about the text and actually attempt to understand the material being discussed.

7. Meditating on God's word is the same way. You need to understand it. I can read the bible all day long, but I need to actually understand what I am reading. If you don't understand something then what should you do?? - Study other sources, find someone to help, look at other scripture passages to help you understand. It was once said that "to meditate is to love the words you read, and to let them shape you".
8. Meditation and prayer do take time and can't be done in a hurry, but to practice let's turn to Psalm 119: 129-133.
  - i. I will read it and you follow along.
  - ii. Take 30 seconds to think about what you just read.
  - iii. I will read it again.
  - iv. Pick out one verse that struck you as important or means something for you.
  - v. Focus on that for 30 seconds.
  - vi. I will read it again and I want you to pick one word that you found important in all five verses just one.
  - vii. Focus on that word and what it means for you life for 30 seconds.
  - viii. What were some of those words????

### **III. Fasting**

1. What does it mean to fast? – To go without something for a period of time.
2. What do you think of when you hear that someone is fasting? – Strange, not normal, out of the ordinary.
3. Lets see what the bible says about fasting. Lets read Matt. 6:16-18
  - What was the motive of the Pharisee way of fasting....for show
  - What should our motive be for fasting....to please God and be rewarded.
4. The purpose of fasting is to take a break from something that you might rely on or spend too much time doing and spend that time focused on God through meditation, prayer, etc. Fasting is not the next diet technique. It is a way for you to draw closer to God.
5. Fasting reveals what controls us. We should be controlled by God, but sometimes we forget this and our controlled by other things.
6. *Leadership* magazine reported on a questionnaire the editor sent to 500 of its readers about their devotional life. One question reads, "What is the one greatest obstacle you struggle with in your devotional life?" Answers: Time 34%, distractions 9%, consistency 7% and discipline 6%.

7. Besides food what are some things that you could take a break from and spend some time focusing on God.

ix. Television

- Most of us love to watch our favorite shows. However, sometimes TV can be a distraction. If you find television to be a challenge for you, then give up your favorite television shows for a while.

x. Video Games

- Like television, video games can be a great thing to fast. It may seem easy to many, but think about how many times each week you pick up that Wii or Xbox remote. That time can be your extra time to focus on God.

xi. Weekends Out

- If you are a total social butterfly, then maybe fasting one or both of your weekend nights out may be more of a sacrifice. You can spend that time in study and prayer, focusing on doing God's will or getting the direction you need from Him.

xii. Cell Phone

- Text messaging and talking on the phone are a big deal to many teens today. Fasting your time on the cell phone or giving up text messaging may be a challenge, but every time you think about texting someone, you'll definitely remind yourself to focus on God.

xiii. MySpace or Facebook

- Social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook take up a lot of time for many Christian teens. Taking a break from them may make you feel a little less social, but that time could be used to reach out to the Lord.

xiv. The Lunch Hour

- Now, you don't have to fast what you eat to fast your lunch hour. Why not take your lunch away from the crowd and spend some time in prayer. If you have the opportunity to go off campus for lunch or have quiet places you can go, taking some lunches away from the group can keep you focused.

xv. Secular Music

- Try turning it off completely and spend time talking to God.

List taken from Kelli Mahoney – “Christian Teens Guide”

## **CONCLUSION**

- All three of these disciplines are available to us if we have enough self control and dedication to do them. I know it's tough out there, but we have the ability to strengthen our relationship with God through prayer, meditation, and fasting.
- There are several things that get in our way which block our relationship with God. We have discussed some of those today.
- Neti Pot Example – Cleans out the nose....we must clean our life and give room to focus on God and his glory.

- What are your priorities?
  - Is it being the best basketball player you can be?
  - The best friend.
  - The best facebooker, twitterer, texter, or video gamer.
  - Is it working in every free moment you have or trying to get the perfect girl or guy, or scoring perfect on every exam.
  - Or...are your priorities set on things above that are focused on God's will and the hope given to us through Jesus Christ.
  - During class one day a student was sitting next to another student that she didn't like and she was discussing with one of her friends about how much she enjoyed going to church. The other individual tapped her on the shoulder and asked which church that she attended and the student responded that she wasn't going to tell him because she didn't want him at her church. I know this lesson wasn't about evangelism, but I hope that each of you is doing a better job at representing God's church than this individual. The way that we can do this is by being disciplined and giving time to focus on what God requires of us in our thoughts and in our actions.
  - Also, don't forget about the rich young ruler and how he wanted to be a follower of Christ, but he loved his riches more than his desire to serve Christ. They were holding him back which was causing him to lose at the game of life.
  - I want us each to win at the game of life. The only way to do this is to reject the way the world sees as "winning" and to be disciplined and remained focused on the goal of being with our father in heaven one day.

#### References

1. Richard Foster – "Celebration of Discipline"
2. J Keathley – "Biblical Meditation"
3. Kelli Mahoney – "Christian Teens Guide"