

7

SPIRITUAL
DISCIPLINES
TO HELP YOU
GROW IN
YOUR FAITH

WORSHIP
Scripture
Solitude
Fasting

FEED
THE

DOG

MINISTRY
prayer
COMMUNITY

BROCK
GILL

LifeWay | Students

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



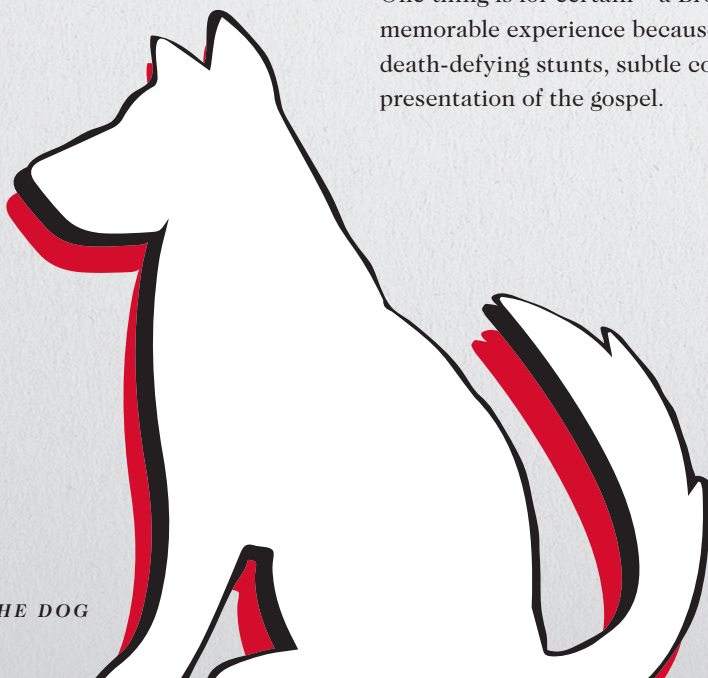
Brock has set the pace for a new generation of edgy, daring illusionists as he amazes audiences with his unique stage show, dry wit, and mind-blowing escapes.

With a passion for reaching people with the gospel truth that changed his own life, Brock went back to college and began performing at church outreach events. News of his creative method of evangelism quickly spread and he began to receive invitations almost immediately.

Since those first events, God has taken Brock's ministry across the United States and the globe, and his heart for the lost has grown. Understanding that people have short attention spans and a desire to be entertained visually, he has learned how to quickly draw in an audience and keep them on the edge of their seats. Brock's message for Christ is clear and effective. He has seen God touch many lives through his ministry.

A major highlight of Brock's career was the release of a documentary called "The Miracles of Jesus." Produced by British Broadcasting Company (BBC) and Discovery Channel, this project gave Brock the opportunity to objectively investigate firsthand the miracles of Jesus in the New Testament. Brock took on the role of lead investigator for the project, an assignment that took him all the way to Israel and Malta. The three-hour program debuted on Discovery Channel.

One thing is for certain—a Brock Gill show will be a memorable experience because of his grand illusions, death-defying stunts, subtle comedy, and unique presentation of the gospel.



SPIRIT AND FLESH

What comes to mind when you hear the word *discipline*? Most people today don't like this word—it conjures up images of punishments like going to time-out or serving a detention. Discipline does not always refer to punishment. It can also refer to the practice of training ourselves in a skill. We all discipline ourselves in various ways. The athlete disciplines herself by running every day and eating high-protein foods. The musician disciplines himself by practicing every day and memorizing notes and chord progressions. The satisfaction of doing anything with excellence only comes to those who put in the work. The same is true of our walks with Christ. If you want to walk in the fullness of joy promised to followers of Jesus, you must learn the value of discipline and commit to faithfully doing the things that lead to spiritual growth and joy in Christ. In *Feed the Dog*, we will unpack seven key practices or disciplines that will help us grow in our relationship with the God who made us. These disciplines will guide us to live out His purpose for our lives.

HOW TO USE

VIDEO GUIDE – Begin each group session by watching the video from Brock Gill that's included in the Leader Kit. Read the Scriptures together and discuss the questions that follow.

GROUP DISCUSSION – Each session unpacks the value and impact of one spiritual discipline. Group leaders will want to read through this section carefully, reviewing each discussion question to prepare to guide students during group time.

DEVOTIONS – There are six one-page personal devotions for group members included in each session. Encourage group members to set aside at least 10-15 minutes each day for completing these devotions. Instruct students to jot down questions they might have so you can address any concerns in the next group time.

LEADER GUIDE – The Leader Guide at the end of this resource contains the main point of each session, an optional activity or illustration to introduce the session, and a challenge to help students engage in the discipline covered in each session on their own.

SESSION

1

*SPIRIT AND
FLESH*



VIDEO

GUIDE

Start by watching the video for Session 1. It begins with an illusion and Brock introducing the study. He shares about the two natures every believer has and how we are called to feed the spirit.

BROCK SHARES THE SECRET TOOLS JEAN-EUGENE ROBERT-HOUDIN HAD AND HOW HE CHANGED THE COURSE OF HISTORY BECAUSE OF THE TIME HE SPENT PRACTICING. Spiritual disciplines require the investment of work and time. It takes time for us to be more and more like Jesus. We have to set our minds on feeding the spirit rather than the flesh (Col. 3:2).

What comes to mind when you hear the word “discipline”?

Do you tend to see spiritual disciplines as more of a duty or a delight?

Think about worship, Scripture, prayer, solitude, fasting, ministry, and community. Are these spiritual disciplines a big part of your life now? What spiritual disciplines do you want to grow in?

List some things you want to learn or gain from this study.

How will you seek to practice the spiritual disciplines this week?



GROUP DISCUSSION

IN 1967 MY FATHER WAS IN COLLEGE AND HAD JUST MET A GIRL WHO WOULD EVENTUALLY BECOME MY MOM.

At the end of the semester, he went home to see his family in south Louisiana. As he pulled into the driveway, he saw his dad standing at the door with a worried look on his face. My dad knew the reason for his concern before he even got out of his car. His father (my grandfather) was holding a letter. My dad had been drafted by the United States Army and had ten days to report to base.

Dad withdrew from college and quickly found himself in the jungle of Vietnam. He was given a beautiful German Shepherd named Fritz. His first assignment was to feed the dog and then the training began. Every day my dad fed, trained, and played with Fritz. In a short time, that dog became his closest companion. Fritz even saved my dad's life. My dad's job was to walk the perimeter of the Army base by himself at night with nothing more than his M-16 rifle and his trusted dog. He felt alone and was often scared, but he trusted his dog. After all, Fritz could smell and hear the enemy coming long before anyone else.

One night, some soldiers near the perimeter fell asleep in a bunker. They never woke up and the enemy slipped in and killed them in their sleep. My dad knew he could never fall asleep. He and the dog had to stay alert. He made sure he and his dog were always healthy because their lives depended on it.

My father still recalls the last day he spent in Vietnam. He had to say goodbye to his best friend, Fritz, who had saved his life so many times. He fed his dog and then jumped onto a helicopter and went home.

As I listen to my dad's story of his time in the military, I think about how the dog was taken care of and healthy because of how invaluable he was. Fritz would save him from the schemes of the enemy.

Similarly, there was a man who had two dogs. The dog he fed became the biggest and healthiest. Likewise, every follower of Christ has two natures: spirit and flesh. Whichever one we feed will grow to be the biggest.

In everything we do, we are either feeding our spirit or our flesh. Our behaviors and disciplines (or lack of) provide nourishment to either our spirit-side or flesh-side of our soul.

Whatever you take in—food or TV or something else—will show up in your life. For example, I have a friend who loves to watch TV. She will often watch an entire season of a show in one day while lying on her couch. I noticed that when she does, her language and thinking change. Her attitude mimics the TV shows

she's watching. I remember when she was having a tough time at her job and she began thinking about what she wanted to do and where she wanted to live. She then explained that she was considering working for the CIA. I thought it was a bit strange because she had no background in that type of work. It turns out she was watching popular TV shows with female actors in the CIA! The show she filled her days with caused her to want to make major changes in her life.

If you consistently fill your mind with something, you think about that thing all the time. I am not saying we should never watch TV, but we certainly should think carefully about the things we give our attention to and fill our minds with. Do they feed the flesh, or do they feed the Spirit?

WHAT IS THE FLESH?

“Flesh” is commonly used by Paul, the author of the Book of Romans, to refer to sinful nature. Flesh is the worldly side of us that is bent toward sin. The flesh is the opposite of the Spirit and is against God. Flesh is self-centered and looks to please man rather than God. Simply put, flesh is the sinful nature. When we think life is all about doing what we want and living for ourselves, we are living in the flesh. Our flesh is the rebellious nature. As F. F. Bruce said, “The flesh . . . is doomed to die.”¹

WHAT IS THE SPIRIT?

When we choose to follow Christ, He dwells inside of us through the Holy Spirit. He puts His Spirit in us. That Spirit is life. The Spirit is the One who leads us to desire God, obey God, and to love Him. The Spirit prays for us—He is on our side.

As Christ-followers, the Spirit of God is alive inside of us. When the Spirit is in us, we will produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). When we sin, we are living in the flesh. We must train ourselves to walk in the Spirit with a prayerful mind and a heart that is submissive to God.

By feeding the Spirit, we are not literally giving food to the Holy Spirit. Rather, we are submitting to the working of the Spirit. When we “feed” the Spirit, then we starve the flesh. Feeding the Spirit or the flesh means we give it attention. We must, as Paul says, not “make plans to gratify the desires of the flesh” (Rom. 13:14).

READ ROMANS 8:13.

. . . because if you live according to the flesh (sinful nature), you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body (flesh), you will live.

Compare the fruit of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-18,19-20) to the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). What happens when we give attention to each?

Our spirit and flesh are willing to eat as much as we feed them. It's up to us to be disciplined enough to know how and what to feed. Whatever we spend time thinking about, watching, listening to, talking about, and so on, reveals the condition of our hearts. If someone reads car magazines every day, then he or she will likely long for a nicer car. If someone is reading and understanding Scripture daily, then it is more likely that he or she will be thinking about spiritual things and have the wisdom provided by God's Word.



Read the following passage from Galatians 5:16-18.

I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Why is it so important for us to walk by the Spirit? How do we do this?

The flesh is always hungry. It's willing to eat whatever trash you feed it. Sometimes it's not so obvious that our food is not good for us. Sometimes we feed our flesh things that seem okay, or good enough, or not harmful. Remember that good is not best. God has what's best, but often we settle for good enough. We must starve the flesh, rather than feed it.

Read the following verses: Romans 8:7-8, 13:14; Galatians 5:19-22. What does each passage say about the flesh and the consequences that follow when we feed it?

The flesh is hostile to God. It's simple: If you live by the flesh, then you are not and will not be pleasing God. This should bother you. It should get your attention.

The flesh desires sin. It's obvious. These verses make clear that there is fruit of the flesh and fruit of the Spirit. Look at the list, and determine which type of life you want to have today, two years from now, or even ten years from now. I personally want a life that is pleasing to God and one that produces the fruit of the Spirit.

So, what action steps can we take to make sure we feed the Spirit instead of the flesh? Here's where the spiritual disciplines come into play.

WHAT ARE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES?

The spiritual disciplines are essential to your faith in Christ—these practices help you grow in your walk with the Lord. Think of these as adventures or as the growth process on your journey with Jesus rather than as chores. Think of the spiritual disciplines as nourishment for your soul and enjoy the time and process of implementing these practices in your daily life.

Have you ever wondered why some people seem to grow in the faith and others fall away? Have you noticed people in your church or school who have made commitments to follow Christ but later seem to be just as worldly as the next?

How can you make sure your walk with Christ is genuine?

I believe the difference between those who live for God after high school (or today) and those who do not, can be traced back to these disciplines. If you avoid these things, in a few short years you can expect to not be living a life of faith. However, if you practice these things, you will grow to become the man or woman God has called you to be. The disciplines are not fruit, values, ideas, or intentions. The disciplines are things you do—you have to act!

So, what are these specific disciplines? I could list many, but let's focus on seven. These seven practices are essential to growing in your faith:

- worship
- Scripture
- prayer
- solitude
- fasting
- ministry
- community

Get ready. Through truth and practicing these spiritual disciplines, you will be equipped to feed the right dog—the spirit, not the flesh.

***“Two natures beat within my breast
The one is foul, the one is blessed
The one I love, the one I hate
The one I feed will dominate.”²
—Anonymous***



1 DEVOTION STUDY DAY ONE

ALTHOUGH BY THIS TIME YOU OUGHT TO BE TEACHERS, YOU NEED SOMEONE TO TEACH YOU THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF GOD'S REVELATION AGAIN. YOU NEED MILK, NOT SOLID FOOD. NOW EVERYONE WHO LIVES ON MILK IS INEXPERIENCED WITH THE MESSAGE ABOUT RIGHTEOUSNESS, BECAUSE HE IS AN INFANT. BUT SOLID FOOD IS FOR THE MATURE—FOR THOSE WHOSE SENSES HAVE BEEN TRAINED TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL.

HEBREWS 5:12-14

I love motorcycles. For a few years, I was an amateur motocross racer and it was the most fun I've ever had. But, not all of it was enjoyable. It was hard work and there were trials along the way.

One weekend I was racing in an endurance race in Kentucky. It was a hot September day, and we were to race through the woods for over two hours, nonstop. Motocross racing is among the most physically demanding sports on the planet. Every muscle is used and your heart rate increases rapidly.

I thought I was prepared. I had just trained for and run a half marathon and was in good shape. I had plenty of water and sports drinks. But, as the race progressed, I became extremely tired. Many other competitors had dropped out due to exhaustion, but I continued.

Near the end, I heard other motorcycles behind me revving their engines as a signal for me to slow down to let them pass me, but no one was there. I was hallucinating. It was weird. I continued until I crossed the finish line, but I got off my bike and could not talk. It turned out that I was close to having a heat stroke because I pushed my body too hard and didn't drink enough fluids.

The lesson for me here was simple: I needed to drink more fluids and eat the right foods to keep my body healthy. The same goes for our spiritual lives. What we consume will either make us healthy or sick. We need to feed ourselves good, nutritious, spiritual food in order for us to grow in godliness.

Have you ever been thirsty or dehydrated physically? What about spiritually?

What is the good, spiritual food and drink that you need to make a part of your daily life? Are you already practicing some of the spiritual disciplines? If not, how will you make them a part of your life this week?