

God's Prayer Boot Camp

The military long ago came to understand that strict discipline is essential to changing men's habits. The early American volunteer militia was a rag-tag, devil-may-care outfit of self-centered, self-serving, fiercely independent misfits. They did pretty much as they pleased. If they were pleased to go to war they did. If they wanted to go home, they did. When the going got tough, the un-tough got going. They just walked away. They took the road most traveled.

It was the professional army that invented "boot camp." In boot camp, in that initiatory experience, all soldiers endured where their wills were broken, their bodies hardened, and their minds indoctrinated, brain-washed, or reprogrammed. Boot camp today is a system of intense external disciplines that you cannot just walk from. It is the bridge between what you were and what you are becoming. It is external discipline forced on you that strips a man of all his pre-conceived ideas, lazy ways, and lousy habits, and molds him into a lean mean fighting machine.

We all need a Spiritual Boot Camp. Jesus had his wilderness experience. Paul spent time in the rocky deserts of Arabia before entering his ministry. All men of God in the Bible had some kind of wilderness sojourn to equip them for ministry. Unlike army boot camps no one forces you to go on one. No drill sergeant stands over you shouting orders and making you do what you don't want to do, because it is good for you.

Spiritual Boot Camp

A recent article in US News & World Report highlighted the recent surge in specialized boot camps across America. It begins with a story of a public relations executive who was shocked into reality when a pants button popped off and sailed across the room during a meeting. She then realized she was out of control, having eaten nine Krispy Kreme donuts. She called it a defining moment in which she realized that self-help and good intentions were not enough. She needed someone like a drill sergeant yelling at her and holding her accountable. Within a few days she enrolled in a fitness boot camp for professionals. For the next six weeks, 45 minutes each weekday, at 6 a.m., rain or shine, she would show up and be barked at with orders from drill sergeant Charlie the Crusher, to run, jump, squat, and crunch.

All across America people are realizing they need help and encouragement to achieve success with disciplines they cannot master alone. There are boot camps for everything imaginable; writers, campers, hikers, golfers, new dads, new moms, brides to be, and poker players.

Isn't it time we had a Spiritual Boot Camp for spiritual disciplines and prayer? Paul hinted at that need in I Corinthians 9:24-27. He was referring to the Olympic games and the need for strict training and applying it to our spiritual lives.

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”

Why not a Spiritual Disciplines Boot Camp?

Imagine a 3-day and 6-day intensive spiritual workout that begins to pattern good disciplines of prayer and intimacy with God three times a year. Then, on your own you continue to work out the disciplines gained in this intensive training. Every pastor ought to enter into strict training if he is to be an equipped soldier of the cross.

What are those spiritual disciplines? We referred to a few of them a few moments ago:

Solitude, we hardly ever get alone for very long. Silence, we hardly ever experience true silence for an hour let alone twenty four hours. Intimacy, the love affair with Jesus is not passionate as it once was. The excitement of the walk with God is gone. Private worship is rare, if not non-existent. When is the last time you sang to the Lord thorough the morning hours? Passion is gone. Tears are rare. Burdens that carry us upward are strangely missing.

Our **Spiritual Boot Camp** is based on Prayer and extends to other Spiritual Disciplines like meditation, memorization, *lectio biblica*, Bible reading, study, journaling, fasting, introspection and confession, and accountability.

In our **Prayer Boot Camp** you will learn and practice six disciplines of intimate prayer, stillness, thanksgiving, worship, confession, clothing, and casting your care.

Finally, our **Intercessors Boot Camp** focuses on building intimacy in prayer with intense times with the Savior in prevailing intercession.

Here's How It Works

Every three months a regional Boot Camp will be conducted in one of the three spiritual disciplines. Pastors who are serious about changing their life habits in prayer and waiting on God should invest in these intensive spiritual workouts.

Because they are primarily for pastors they will be conducted as non-weekend events. This also keeps the cost down since most conference facilities are in demand more on weekends. Each Camp begins on Sunday night and runs through Wednesday noon. All sessions are a must and allow no excuses for leaving early or arriving late. Discipline is discipline. There are no cell phones, radios, TVs, computers, or secular books allowed in your possession. This is strict training and intensely focused on spiritual disciplines of saying 'No' to the world and 'Yes' to the Savior, our Commander in Chief.

Every morning time is reserved for lectures on the disciplines at hand, then the remainder of the day is organized so as to practice that discipline. Evening times will be continue the lecture and instruction with practical times together exercising the disciplines. Each participant will define his own discipline and schedule for the coming weeks and months and post that disciplined schedule for others to see. Each will hold themselves accountable for faithfulness in those disciplines and times of private training. Participants will network with others in the group and select one or two others to whom they will report weekly on their progress or regress via e-mail.

The entire program is a year-long Boot Camp Training experience. Participants should plan to remain in the program for all three camps and finish the course of Spiritual Basic Training. Once they have completed the course and successfully added these new disciplines to their lives they are entitled to conduct their own Spiritual Boot Camps in their local settings. After the first year we will be adapting the program for lay people and local teaching settings.