

The Christian Worldview Transcript

Date: August 21, 2010

Host: David Wheaton

Topic: Spiritual Disciplines: What's Biblical, What's Not

Guest: Ken Silva

DAVID WHEATON: Spiritual Disciplines: What's Biblical, What's Not. Ken Silva joins us today on The Christian Worldview where the mission is to think biblically about all matters of life and faith so that we can then live accordingly. And to share the Good News that Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be, the Way, the Truth and the Life and that His Word is both relevant and our basis for living in this modern world. I am David Wheaton, the host of The Christian Worldview. Our official website is TheChristianWorldview.com.

Our National Presenting Sponsor is Summit Ministries, the very best in Christian worldview resources, conferences and curricula. Their website is Summit.org. We are also supported by two other national sponsors, The Masters College and The S. Lewis Johnson Institute and of course, listeners like you.

I am so glad you joined up on The Christian Worldview today as we talk about spiritual disciplines. As we discussed last week in the program, the importance of discipline in the Christian life as it relates to becoming more like Christ from Romans 8:28. We talked about the verse in 1 Timothy 4:7, *Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness*. James 4:8, *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you*. In other words, we need to exercise discipline in our Christian lives for the purpose of becoming more like Christ, for the purpose of becoming more holy, more godly.

This week on the program we want to take a part 2 and take it one step further and get very specific with what types of spiritual disciplines should we be practicing in our lives and is there a point in which we can go too far and practice these disciplines in an unbiblical manner?

Ken Silva is a Pastor at Connecticut River Baptist Church in New Hampshire. He is also the editor of Apprising Ministries. Their website is apprising.org. It is one of the most visited religious blogs on the Internet and he joins us today on The Christian Worldview to talk about spiritual discipline. Ken, welcome to The Christian Worldview.

KEN SILVA: It is great to be here David, thank you.

DAVID: You have written extensively about this and that is why I wanted to have you on the program. You have lots of different posts on your site, apprising.org, about the issue of spiritual disciplines. Let's just start out generally speaking. I read those verses about drawing near to God and He will draw near to you. This is the point of discipline so we can draw closer to God. This is a command that we are to draw near to God. We are to discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness. How does one actually draw near to God and discipline themselves for the purpose of godliness?

KEN: I think that is what is wrapped up in the reformation principle, *sola scriptura*, which is the Scripture alone is where we approach God, where we know we are experiencing Him. So through His word or one of the means of grace is where we would grow closer to Him.

DAVID: You are saying studying or reading the word. Is that all?

KEN: I think that is a good place to start. In my church we have a little saying that I developed when I used to be a head football coach at a local secular high school. One of the players that I lead to Christ, I taught him something pretty simple. I told him every day to pray, read the Bible and do what it says. Within that simple little formula is the means of grace of approaching God and saying, I want to grow close to you God. We know that in Acts 2:42-47 we see that the early church devoted themselves to the Apostle's teaching which we now have in Scripture. As we come to God, we know that by spending time in His word, we are going to grow closer to Him. Praying as well, which is communing with God as you said in one of your pieces, a relationship with God, spending time with Him.

DAVID: These spiritual disciplines you talked about, praying, reading the word, fasting and even worship draws us near to God as well. These spiritual disciplines are often called “spiritual formations.” They can be turned into something beyond what the Bible intends. Many Christians listening may not have heard about some of these things. How are they turned into something beyond what the Bible intends and where do these things come from?

KEN: I think that is a great question and a good place to approach this is to back up a step and say why are we having this discussion right now? Why is the church having discussions about spiritual disciplines because obviously fasting, reading Scripture, praying was all part of the Hebrew, the Jewish way of approaching God. What happened is in 1978, we bring in a fellow by the name of Richard Foster. Richard Foster is a Quaker; he is a mystic to begin with. He comes up with what he calls spiritual disciplines and he comes up with a bunch of different ones, adding things like solitude and silence, which we will get to in a minute. In his book, *Celebration of Discipline*, this whole situation begins. Even J.I. Packer in the 25th anniversary of *Celebration of Discipline* said, “it is a great thing, Richard Foster developed spiritual disciplines.”

I think that is where we have a problem because spiritual discipline, as you said, is important. We are told to discipline ourselves. However, as we are going to get to, you go beyond this when you start setting it up as a means of grace. Certain things like journaling, for instance, may or not be good depending on how someone looks at it but it isn't in Scripture. You aren't going to find God or one of the Apostles telling us we need to be doing journaling. That is when we start to have a need for discussion. That is the way I put it.

DAVID: You are listening to Ken Silva this morning on The Christian Worldview, the Pastor of Connecticut River Baptist Church in New Hampshire. He is also the editor and blogger at apprising.org. It is Apprising Ministries. We are talking about spiritual disciplines: what's biblical, what's not. What we are going to do a little later in the next segment is to talk about some of the basic spiritual disciplines that everyone knows about, prayer, study, fasting, worship, confession, these kinds of things and then we are going to do a comparison between what is biblical, how we should approach those spiritual disciplines biblically and then how are some of these mystical folks taking them beyond what the word intends, beyond what God intends and where that leads. We are going to do that in the next segment but before we get there, tell us some of the leaders who are proponents of the unbiblical spiritual disciplines. You mentioned Richard Foster who is the guru with his landmark books, *The Celebration of Discipline*, but beyond Richard Foster and I think a lot of these names will be very familiar to an evangelical audience who is mainly the audience listening today because these books and these people have become very popular within the evangelical movement.

KEN: It is good to look at how it got that way. What happened was, one of the things that Apprising Ministries covers is a thing called the Emerging Church. One of the reasons I started covering that was when God gave us the website, which we never imagined having. The started Apprising Ministries as simply an outreach for me to do local apologetics and discernment work here in New Hampshire where we are based. We had someone give us a website and suddenly working with Ingrid Schleuter and I am on the national radar somehow.

As we came on we thought there is something that I have to cover and the emerging church, being that I am a former Roman Catholic, I was raised Roman Catholic and had converted to Christianity, I looked at the Emerging Church and I noticed that they were bringing in Roman Catholic mysticism. If you remember an article in 2004, Christianity Today put it out, called The Emergent Mystique. In that, we are introduced to Brian McLaren and Rob Bell. In that piece, Brian McLaren says that Richard Foster and Dallas Willard are key mentors for the Emergent Church. That is very important because the Emergent Church was aimed at the young people. It came into vogue through youth groups and what they call alternative youth services and it was something different. What was different about it was the practice of mysticism. They don't call it that, but that is really what it is. It is the old Roman Catholic mystics. They take Teresa Vavala, her disciple, St. John of the Cross those kind of people and take their counter-reformation spirituality and start to practice it. They got that from Richard Foster and essentially his spiritual twin Dallas Willard. There are two names to look at. The other names that would become popular came on the Emerging Church side. Brian McLaren and as they get larger they get involved in some evangelical places. They get in Willow Creek, which is Bill Hybels' group. Bill Hybels has been teaching this stuff since 1985 and a lot of people don't know that. Also, Rick Warren; if you go on Saddleback website, you will find books by Foster and Willard, Del Calhoun, John Ortberg. These are people who are taking this Roman Catholic mysticism, repackaging it in evangelical terms and sprayed with

Christian terminology. That is the way that Dr. Walter Martin, the late apologetic guy who did the King of the Cults, he talks a lot about how the cults would likely spray Christian terms over things and that is where we get contemplative prayer, which is essentially meditation in an altered state of consciousness, although the Christian doing it, doesn't say it is. We really have to define terms because spiritual disciplines in and of themselves are not bad. What is happening is that they are being abused and that is the key.

DAVID: Ken Silva joins us today on The Christian Worldview as we talk about spiritual disciplines: what's biblical, what's not. I can imagine that list of folks you gave me, Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, Eugene Peterson and a lot of the Emergent Church folks like McLaren and Rick Warren, I would imagine that they are not all on the same page. I would imagine Rick Warren would pick and choose some of the things he might think would be helpful where folks like Richard Foster and Dallas Willard are much more involved in it. It seems to me that within the evangelical churches you might get youth pastors or the regular pastors who see the benefit of some of these more unbiblical, spiritual disciplines. They wouldn't think that they are that way but they would appropriate just some of the things in the church as evangelicals always do and say what works over in the Emergent Church, why is that attracting so many young people and pull a few things from there. I am sure you are not equating Rick Warren with Richard Foster, but you see how they cross the line and take in a portion of these unspiritual disciplines.

KEN: Correct. In fact, in his book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, which comes before *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren specifically says that the leaders of the Spiritual Formation Movement and that is what Warren calls it, are Dallas Willard and Richard Foster. He is well aware of their work. You are correct and that is what that alternative service thing I was telling you about. When the Emergent Church starts, it starts about 1997. It wasn't always around. In 1997, Leadership Network, which is what launched the Purpose Driven, Seeker Driven Movement, they launch another movement out of the Young Leaders Network and out of that comes the Emergent Church. That is people like Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones become involved really early on in there too. So you have, McLaren, Jones and Pagitt later become Emergent Village.

Those guys are the far end of this. However, they were used in youth groups and you hit a very key point. Youth pastors and young adult pastors and especially worship leaders are generally the ones that bring some of these practices in. They say, we see so and so doing it and it seems to be working for them. We will bring in a modified version of it but it opens the door and that is the tough part.

(break)

DAVID: I am joined by Ken Silva today. He is the Pastor of Connecticut River Baptist Church in New Hampshire and also the Editor of Apprising Ministries, great website, apprising.org. As we talk about spiritual disciplines: what's biblical, what's not; spiritual disciplines from a standpoint of prayer, study, fasting, meditation and worship, these things the Bible calls us to so that we can draw closer to God and discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness. The point of today's show is to say that there a lot of spiritual disciplines but they can be taken too far, beyond what the Bible intends and get into something that is actually displeasing to God.

What I want to do is to start out by reading a lengthy quote by Dr. Gary Gilley. He wrote this column that was reposted on your website. He is the Pastor of Southern View Chapel. He said he wanted to begin this section of his post by relaying an experience that Richard Foster, who wrote the book *Celebration of Discipline*, who is very much into these spiritual formations, spiritual disciplines and what we would say would be an unbiblical manner shares in *Celebration of Discipline*, his book. "Having come to the conclusion that there must be "more spiritual resources" than I was experiencing, he prayed, "Lord is there more you want to bring into my life? I want to be conquered and ruled by you. Is there anything blocking the flow of your power? Reveal it to me." God seemed to answer this prayer through a growing impression that something in his path was impeding the flow of life. So he set aside blocks of time on three consecutive dates to listen to God in absolute silence through the use of journaling, a process by where God is supposed to reveal His mind to the silent participant. After the third day, Richard Foster took his list to a friend who volunteered to serve as his confessor, who prayed for healing for all the sorrows and hurts of Foster's past as presumably revealed by God. It was following this experience of journaling an experience not taught in the Bible but common in the occult world that it seemed to him that he was "released to explore" what were for me new and uncharted

regions of the spirit. Following that event, Richard Foster said I began to move into several of the disciplines described in this book that I had never experienced before.”

Ken, I would like to talk about the disciplines he describes in his book, *Celebration of Disciplines*. He breaks them into three categories, inward, outward and corporate. What I would like to you to do is go through them one by one. First I will read the discipline, you tell us what the biblical intent for that discipline is and then contrast it with what it has been turned into by these folks like Richard Foster, Dallas Willard who turn regular spiritual disciplines into something that is unbiblical.

Let's start out with the inward disciplines he lists as prayer, study and fasting. Why don't you start out with prayer because that is the center point of many of these spiritual disciplines. What is the biblical intent and how has it turned into something unbiblical?

KEN:The biblical intent is obviously for us to commune with God. It is for His Spirit to work through us because prayer is also praying according to God's will. You remember the Bible tells us in 1 John 5, if we pray anything according to His will, He hears it. If He hears us, we know we have what we have asked for. What people forget sometimes, it isn't so much what we are talking about, it is God praying through us. Prayer, in the sense that Foster is doing, if you look at the fruit of what it produced; remember he uses prayer. He talks about in the beginning, I ask God to reveal this to me because is there something blocking the flow of whatever. He prays, but what is the result that he gets? That is the problem. It is not prayer itself, it is what Foster gets from it , the subjective thing he gets from it.

DAVID: What about these different types of prayer they are doing, called contemplative or centering prayer? They pray in certain postures, prayer wheels, what exactly are those?

KEN: Contemplative prayer is also known as centering prayer; the words are interchangeable. That is what Foster calls the real work of the Christian. He doesn't talk about it as much in *Celebration of Discipline*, he talks about it more in his book, *Prayer, Home of the Heart*. There he says contemplative prayer or centering prayer is going on an inward journey. As we go on an inward journey, that is where the terms silence and solitude come in. We are going to be in seclusion somewhere in silence, in what mystics like Foster call wordless prayer.

I will back up one quick step and tell you again, Richard Foster is not a Christian, he is a Quaker. There is a difference between that; Quakers have never been Evangelicals because they are mystics. George Fox, who founded it, specifically rejected *sola scriptura* and he started the whole Quaker movement upon literally what God "spoke to him." He heard an audible voice that tells George Fox, teach this book and everything will be ok. That is the same thing Rob Bell heard and that is the same thing that Victor Paul Wierwille of The Way International heard. Hearing voices isn't necessarily a good thing.

That is the problem, we start with a wrong kind of prayer. If you remember in Luke 11, Jesus is praying and the Disciples see that and say Lord teach us to pray. If wordless, centering contemplative prayer was so important, don't you think that is a great place for Jesus to tell them? He doesn't say that. What He says is, when you pray, "say." They are words and He gives us an outline of things to say. Not that we repeat that verbatim, although that is ok, but we also get the foundation of prayer there.

DAVID: Isn't there a repetition of one word they use when they do this kind of prayer?

KEN: That is a good point. Contemplative, centering prayer begins with a guy named John Main and it is called mantra meditation. John Main is an apostate Roman Catholic Monk who discovers through working with a Hindu Master, meditation. Using a mantra which is a word or a phrase like Jesus Christ, God, Son and Savior or Jesus or God to center yourself. Again, the same thing with contemplative prayer, we are not thinking. We are in a maze of post-modern words that don't mean the same thing that you and I would think they would mean. The only way I can equate it David, is to say that if you and I were to talk to a Mormon missionary and if we were to ask them if they believe in the Trinity, they would nod their head and say sure, but their trinity is a different one. There are three separate Gods who decided to work together for one purpose. That is not the Trinity. Neither is contemplative prayer, thinking about your prayer, which is what you and I might think it might be. It is not, it is emptying the mind through this mantra so every time you start drifting in

your prayer you are doing meditation at this point. You are not doing meditation like the puritans are talking about where we are going to go out and think very deeply and chew on the word and think about it and let it permeate our being.

It is absolutely biblical to do that. Those people are not doing that at this point. They are doing a type of meditation that is really transcendental meditation. You will hear people like Foster and Willard and these contemplatives talk about "transformation." That is simply a Christian phrase from the Bible. Obviously we are transformed, God is transforming us more and more in the likeness of Christ but He is doing it through the means of grace and reading the Bible and praying and fasting and those types of things.

When we are talking about silence and solitude in this manner; I live on the edge of town. I live in a great place. I can walk out my door and go right into the woods. It is awesome. So I could be in solitude, by myself and be silent, listen to the birds and talk to God. I do that all the time but I don't empty my mind through a mantra and get myself into an altered state of consciousness. That is what these people are doing and that is terribly dangerous.

DAVID: It is good that you nuanced that because these things do take a lot of nuance. Someone might be listening and say that sounds like a good thing to empty your mind and be quiet before God but it leads down a wrong road and does something that God never intends. Again, you are listening to Pastor Ken Silva today here on The Christian Worldview. The website is apprising.org.

We talked about inward disciplines of prayer, let's do quickly one more on study because that is a spiritual discipline to study the word. What does God want us to do regarding study and what do some of these unbiblical spiritual disciplines lead to?

KEN: Great question. Again, one quick thing; each of these things can easily be a program in and of themselves, so let the listener understand I am doing the best I can to do a simple overview for discussion. I am not here to argue with anybody.

As far as that situation we introduce a term called *lectio divina* which is an old Roman Catholic practice of repeating a verse of Scripture over and over again, getting it into your mind and meditating on it in a bad way and finding out what "God is saying to you." We have had years of Bible studies of people sitting in a room going what does that verse mean to you, what does that verse mean to you? Proper biblical study is what does that mean? The grammatical, historical hermeneutic, what does it mean? To Foster, he is not interested in that because if he is, he is going to have all these Roman Catholic things thrown out because the reformation wasn't about do we like Roman Catholic people. It had nothing to do with that. It had to do with the gospel and it had to do with how do we experience God and how do we know what God says? Do we listen to some magisterian tell us this? No, we listen to the Scripture. God wants us to study Scripture because in 2 Peter 1 this verse is often misunderstood. No Scripture is a private interpretation and that means we look for what God has to say.

(break)

DAVID: We talked about some of the inward disciplines that Richard Foster, the guru of the spiritual formation movement, he has an organization called Renovare that promotes. We talked about the inward disciplines of prayer, study and we will skip over fasting now for the sake of time. He goes into the outward disciplines, which are simplicity, solitude where he brings up the issue of journaling (I want you to comment on that), submission and service. Why don't you pick two of those and tell us what the biblical call for us in these areas is and what it has turned into unbiblically.

KEN: One of the things we are dealing with here is you talk about Foster with the outward disciplines and inward disciplines. My question is where are those listed in Scripture? Where do we find the list of these disciplines? The answer is, we don't. That is what makes them difficult because once you look at some of these things, they may or may not be good things. In Ephesians 2:10 The Christian is saved to good works in Christ that God has prepared before that we would do. He decides what works we are going to do. What happens when we deal with this subject, we have to go back and look at the fruit that is produced. Remember Jesus said we will recognize false teachers by their fruit. He didn't say we might, He said we will. Well we will if we know what the Scripture says.

The problem with things like journaling and the other disciplines you mentioned, is we don't have a biblical command anywhere in Scripture to journal. When someone comes along like Richard Foster and says that you have to do journaling. Willard talks about it also in his book, *Celebration of Discipline*. He talks about the list and he lists a whole bunch of them and a lot of them are taken from practices of old Roman Catholics. They were called acerlights and the lived in cells next to a church. They have romanticized some of these things and brought them in.

The issue is, would journaling in and of itself be wrong? No, but it is wrong if you start to think that if I do this then God is obligated to do something. The means of grace is that God has promised, for instance, if we study His word, if we pray, if we fast in the correct sense, He will bless that. That is in Scripture. We can find that. I can't find service. What exactly is that? Does that mean the Christian doesn't serve? Of course not. This is where the devil comes in and that is who is behind this. He comes in and twists everything.

What Satan does David, and I have studied this for years, is he gets you locked up in a maze and a matrix of terminology so that two Christians are talking about two different things using the same words. It has been a tactic he has used in the cults for years and it goes all the way back to Genesis 3 where Satan said to Eve, did God really say this? The idea was to confuse her as to what He did say.

That is the tactic he is using in the evangelical community right now because young people are hungry for more of God. That is a good thing. I have a real heart for young people especially from coaching football for years. I had a group that I took all the way from 7th grade through graduation and I worked with those kids and I watched them grow up and become young men. I am still close to a lot of those guys. It was a wonderful time in my life. I was blessed that I could talk about Jesus right in the huddle and the school had no problem with that. It was awesome. I look at those kids and say what am I going to teach them? I am not going to teach them things that are going to hurt them. I am going to teach them how to be Christians.

The young man whose name is Ryan, I talk about leading to Christ, he probably has more wisdom than most elders twice his age; he is 21 now because he did a simple thing. He prays, he reads the Bible and he does what it says. He doesn't do any of these contemplative practices and this guy is working with youth groups in his community. He does sound for them and also teaches in a number of different churches simply because he met God within the means of grace. That is what we want young people to do.

DAVID: I think you also brought up a good point in that answer. You said the intent of the unbiblical spiritual disciplines that go beyond what the Bible wants or intends, there actually is a good intention there. They want to grow closer to God; they want to discipline themselves for the purpose of godliness but isn't that just the way Satan operates? He takes what God says and then he twists it and then it takes a critical thinking, biblical mind to understand that this is not what God intends because this is where it goes. I think that was a good point.

Let's go to Pennsylvania and Andy welcome to The Christian Worldview. What is your question or comment for Ken Silva with regard to spiritual disciplines?

ANDY: Thank you for taking my call. I would like to know the dangers of emptying your mind with a discipline called Holo pono pono, a Hawaiian mantra.

DAVID: Have you heard of that Ken?

KEN: I have not heard of that specific Hawaiian version but it is the same idea of centering prayer where you are emptying your mind and you are going to "fill it" with whatever they think they're getting. The danger of that is Jesus clearly told us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind and all our strength. If you are shutting your mind down to quiet what the mystics call the monkey mind because the mind is always thinking and it is going from topic to topic, if you are doing that, you are silencing a gift God gave you. What it does, it shuts down critical reasoning skills. David, you brought up a great point. If you analyze these things logically, you can see through it. But if you don't and you try to look at these things with your heart and say what is the harm in emptying my mind and going down inside myself, I get a peaceful, easy feeling. Yes, but what other things do you get from that? Look at the fruit of this contemplative movement and it takes you right

back to ecumenism and that the Roman Catholic Church is simply another version of the Christian church and it is not according to the reformers.

DAVID: Let's go next to Lubbock, Texas and Derek welcome to The Christian Worldview. What is your question or comment for Ken Silva about some of these spiritual disciplines?

DEREK: Thank you for taking my call. I have a friend of mine who is orthodox. They have a lot of fasting times and I am wondering if that is biblical? He always mentions that it goes back to centuries ago.

KEN: Fasting in and of itself is not wrong at all. It is a means of grace. It is something we set aside time and you can fast more than just food. You can fast things that we might want to do. You can say, Lord today I am not going to take a drive like I like to do, I am going to spend the time with You. That is absolutely biblical and it is a good thing when you feel led to do that.

The problem comes in when you think you are going to put God as some obligation. This is what pietism does. What people don't remember is that right after the reformation, late 1600s and early 1700s, the whole pietistic movement starts outside of Lutherans. It is the same thing where people were hungry for more of just the intellectual discourse on what God's word said which is what a lot of the Reformers were dealing with at the time. People wanted more and they came up with a rebirth of pietism. It has already been done. What it does, it leads to people saying they are holier than others because I spend x amount of time in discipline and you don't. That is what it does. I am going to call it exactly what it is; it is a neo-gnosticism. It is a new version of, 'well I am Richard Foster and David and Ken you really need to come to me to find out the real way to seek God and you need to do these disciplines.' Do you see what it is? We have to get these special gurus and that is what I call them.

In fact, some of my writing is pretty blunt and I am doing it for a reason. We are on the playing field of ideas and I am using the imagery of what I learned coaching football. Some guys on the football defense play middle linebacker, inside linebacker. If you try to run the ball through the middle of the field, you run into these guys. They are not real pleasant to run into. That is my position, that is what I do. I know the people I write about read what I write. For whatever reason God blessed Apprising to the point where if I write about Doug Pagitt, he will call me or he will write an e-mail to me. I know these guys. So I write to get right to the point with them. The point is, these guys are not doing something new, they are simply taking what Roman Catholic mystics like Thomas Keaton in the 70s and Thomas Merton in the 60s, they already taught this garbage and their fruit is they remained a slave to an organization that anathematized the gospel itself according to R.C. Sproul.

DAVID: Christ rebuked the Pharisees for teaching a false gospel and false ways, He rebuked them sharply so I think there is room for that in this particular issue of unbiblical spiritual disciplines.

(break)

DAVID: We are speaking about spiritual disciplines today on The Christian Worldview, what's biblical and what's not. We are looking at things like prayer and fasting and study and worship and some of the other things we do to draw near to God. There is good intent there, that is not bad, that is good, but we need to make sure we are doing it in a way that is pleasing to God, that is honoring to Him, that doesn't take us down a wrong path towards a mystical or subjective experience. Ken, before I get back to more phone callers, let me just read a quote. I believe this is from Richard Foster's book, *Celebration of Discipline*, where Robert Weber, a professor of theology at Wheaton College summed up Foster's impact. He said, "Over the last two decades my own personal spiritual pilgrimage has taken me away from the propositional and rationalistic mindset that proclaim an intellectualized, proof-oriented faith toward a Christianity of practice and experience."

That pretty much sums up what all this is about. It goes towards this experiential, subjective faith. Let me ask you the question, how should the subjective or experiential or emotional aspect operate within our faith. We know it shouldn't drive it completely like that professor is saying but how should it operate within our faith?

KEN: A good example would be how I felt called initially into ministry. I am reading 2 Timothy 4 and that is the Spirit of God through the Apostle Paul writing to a Pastor named Timothy and one of the things he tells him in verse 5 is do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. I read that and go ok, that is

what God wanted Timothy to do and then I began to feel subjectively, 'I think God is calling me.' As I began to study the Bible and pray and do what it says, 22 plus years later I am talking to David Wheaton on The Christian Worldview about the importance of making sure what we do is biblically based. In other words, I experienced God there David except I did it through *sola scriptura* by looking at what the Scripture meant initially. While if God called other people to ministry, I am sure He is going to call people too, and He called me.

The subjective problem you hit on, Robert Weber was the guy who starts a movement called the Ancient Future Faith. That is what he goes on to do. He is one of the guys who underlies what the Emerging Church later would be and guys like Rob Bell. The most popular name in youth groups right now would Rob Bell. Rob Bell is an Evangelical if I am a Mormon. We are using the same Christian terms but they don't mean the same thing. This is Rob Bell from his sermon, I will say it again and again and again. This is October of last year. He says, "It is interesting how many traditions" (he is talking about religious traditions say Islam, Muslims, the Hindus and the Buddhists). This is Bell again, "when you read the great enlightened ones meditation, centering prayer, reflection, in every tradition you find the mystics, the great ones always have a period of time of meditation." Most young people aren't going to stop and realize what he just told you. What he just told us was "the great enlightened ones" are who? They mystics. Where are these mystics? In all traditions. That is where they get the idea that God is working in other religions. God isn't working with the Sufi-Muslims. God is not working with Hindus. They are outside of relationship with Christ. It doesn't mean He isn't drawing people from there. These guys are masters at kicking out the expositors. We don't need the R.C. Sprouls and the Steven Lawsons. Yes we do, they are great teachers. I use their teachings myself. Lawson has a great book about the foundation of grace, which I use a lot in my work.

They want to get rid of those guys – why? So their subjective feelings can take over. What do the subjective feelings always lead these guys to? Social causes. Are social causes in and of themselves wrong? No, but we want to make sure what we are involved with is what God has called us to be involved with.

DAVID: That is a great point Ken. Let's go to Greensboro, North Carolina and Fail welcome to The Christian Worldview. What is your question or comment for Ken Silva with regard to spiritual disciplines?

FAIL: Hi Ken, my name is Fail like the Lord will never fail you. My question is I hear about fasting and personally I don't understand how abstaining from food or any other thing in your life makes you hear from God. I don't understand the connection. Then I go back to the verse in the Bible where Jesus tells the Disciples, if you want to rebuke this type of demons, you have to fast and pray. Then Jesus goes on and rebukes and the demon comes out but he didn't fast.

KEN: It is not so much that fasting makes us hear from God. Sometimes not having food in the body does have a physiological beneficial effect. That is just natural in the body itself. Also, you are setting time aside for extra prayer when you are fasting as well so it is times of seeking God and God has promised to meet us when we approach Him through a means of grace like this.

DAVID: People listening today may not have heard about these spiritual disciplines before or go in an unbiblical direction. What are some of the obvious signs that they are coming into a person's church?

KEN: You are going to be hearing names like Thomas Merton, Theresa Vavala, Julian of Norwich, you will start hearing them talk in glowing terms of Richard Foster and other mystics because they are all mystics. They are all people who are subjective as opposed to objective in their faith. That is the main thing, you are going to see them talk about the "great mystics" or the great religious traditions or the inner Masters, I think that is what Foster calls them.

DAVID: Ken I appreciate your time on the program today. I want to thank you for all you are doing for explaining these things clearly to us. It does take a sharp, biblical mind and we appreciate your lending your time and expertise to this important issue. God Bless you Ken.

We do live in a changing and challenging Christian world that takes spiritual discernment to discern where these spiritual disciplines go, whether in a positive sense or an unbiblical sense but there is one thing you can count on, Jesus Christ and His word are the same yesterday, today and forever.