



## ADRIAN WRIGHT

### EXTRAORDINARY

So I'm standing in the midst of about 30 000 young people on a rag farm somewhere in Pretoria, and as exciting as it is to see Joel Houston on a screen 600 miles ahead of me and watching masses of students and teens dancing to the sound of *"Break Free"*, I somehow feel very alone. There's nothing like being in the midst of a massive crowd to spark a little bit of introspection. As I go beyond the noise and lose myself in the silence, I hear God speak a simple phrase in my heart, *"From ordinary to extraordinary."*

When I read the Bible and see all the promises and purposes that God has for His Church and His people, the Extraordinary Life, I can't help but think that we have settled for something less. Somewhere between the church pews and the Christian bookstores we stopped being Christians. We went from being Christ-like to being

churchgoers, from being the Body to being bored, and from being saved to being served. We desperately need to take a hold again of that for which Christ has laid a hold of us.

**How do we do this practically though? What are the steps we need to take in order to go from being ordinary to being Extraordinary?** Quite simply, they're called Spiritual Disciplines. More than just a set of have-to-do's, spiritual disciplines are essentially about becoming more like Jesus. They're about cultivating the kind of life in which God can work. As Richard Foster said in his classical book *The Celebration of Disciplines*, *"The spiritual disciplines are a means of receiving God's grace. ... they allow us to place ourselves before God so He can transform us."* **Are you ready to be transformed?**

### MOTIVATION

I have learnt that motivation is very important in order to have discipline. Think about how empty the gyms are in winter and how full they are in spring. Why? Because

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everyone knows that in two or three months they have to go to the beach, so they have the right motivation to be disciplined. Our motivation should be the Fear of the Lord. That means that we should want to be disciplined spiritually because we understand who God is, we understand who we are, and in light of that we want to please Him. Without a reverential understanding of the greatness of God, we will struggle to be disciplined.

## PRAYER

Prayer, of course, is much more than a spiritual discipline; it is a life. Prayer is opening our lives to God for change. Prayer is recognition that God is God and we are not, and so in prayer we yield our desires to God's. Prayer is communication and fellowship with God, the very lifeline of our relationship with Him. Henri J. M. Nouwen said, **"Those who live prayerfully are constantly ready to receive the breath of God, and to let their lives be renewed and expanded."** Jesus knew temptation was heading His way and so He spent forty days in prayer and fasting; Peter on the other hand slept instead of praying and ended up denying Jesus. We need to rise up and pray, lest we enter into temptation. I would say that every person who is serious about his or her relationship with God should spend at least one hour a day in solid prayer. No less.

## THE WORD

In Ezekiel 37 we have the famous picture of the Valley of the Dry Bones. God instructs Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones and as he does they rattle and come together and flesh and sinews form on them, but there is no breath in them. God instructs Ezekiel to prophesy again and so the breath of God enters them and they live. The breath of God is life. It's interesting that in 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul states that all scripture is **"inspired by God"** or **"God-breathed"** the word used here for breath is the equivalent of the word used in Ezekiel 37. In other words just as the breath of God will bring life to dry bones, so scripture will bring life to your dry spirit. Studying, reading and practicing the Word of God, will release God's power into your life.

## FASTING

Psychologists agree that the strongest human instinct is that of survival. Linked to that instinct is our urge to eat. Our stomachs therefore represent the cravings of the flesh and our fleshly desires. By fasting we deny ourselves,

dethrone our stomachs, and declare **"that man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"**. There is more to living than being alive.

## SILENCE & SOLITUDE

We are addicted to noise. We need noise. Silence is creepy, frightening even. Silence steals away the distractions of life that anesthetize us from the feeling that our lives are still empty. As Dallas Willard said, **"Silence is frightening because it strips us as nothing else does, throwing us upon the stark realities of our life."** As Christians we need times of silence and solitude so that we can reflect on our lives and hear the voice of God, just like Jesus did.

## SERVICE & SUBMISSION

Jesus taught that the way up is to go down. He taught His first disciples that the secret to becoming great is to become the servant of all. He illustrated His teaching by putting on the dress of a lowly house servant, and washing the grimy feet of his students. **"Jesus took a towel and a basin and redefined greatness."** Richard Foster. As Christians we need to practice the disciplines of service and submission until they become a way of life.

## FELLOWSHIP

The life of faith is not an individual affair. Yes, each of us has our unique life of faith, but it cannot exist separate from the community of faith. When you give your life to Jesus you also become a part of His Body, which means that you have to have fellowship with other believers. As Eugene Peterson puts it, **"Whether we like it or not, the moment we confess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, that is, from the time we become a Christian, we are at the same time a member of the Christian church."** Joining a church is not just about attending services or listening to sermons; it's about building Godly relationships that will encourage us to become more like Jesus.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of the Spiritual Disciplines, but it might just help to get you started. If you call yourself a Christian but you're not practicing these disciplines chances are that your spiritual life is in trouble. It's time for us to get our minds set on spiritual things, striving after Christ-likeness, so that we may go from the ordinary to God's Extraordinary.