

# Yielding the Peaceful Fruit

In today's digital age, it is getting harder and harder to stay focused on the task at hand. Ever distracted and ever yearning, we keep searching for the next best article, the next funny video, or the next big break in our personal or professional lives. Even worse, this constant movement may leave us feeling unanchored during the moments where life inevitably gets difficult. Cultivating a steady and unchanging spiritual life will help quiet the distractions and brace us for the struggles that will come.

1. Read Hebrews 12:1-13. Describe a recent trial in your life that you faced. What made it challenging? In what ways did it make you question your faith?
2. What are some sins of yours that "cling so closely"? How do they make a trying time more difficult?
3. Why do you think the writer drew a parallel between parental discipline and God's discipline? Can you remember a time where you were disciplined and it led to something positive? Explain.

Developing spiritual discipline makes room for deep contemplation and sanctification. When we falter in our spiritual life, we mustn't become overwhelmed by shame or regret. Rather, we should use these moments to learn more about ourselves, learn more about God, and create opportunities to heal. True spiritual discipline will help us understand that our trials are momentary, and God's peace is everlasting.

4. Read Isaiah 35:3-8. What weaknesses of yours would you want God to "strengthen" and "make firm"? Why?
5. Describe a time in your life where you've driven off the "Holy Way." How did you find your sense of direction again? What insight did your detour give you?
6. List three new habits that will help nourish your spiritual life. Write them down, and think of someone who can help keep you accountable to them.

In closing, reflect on the words of St. Gregory of Narek from his Book of Lamentations:

“ Now, when your will is upon me, darkness becomes light for me. When your lamp of hope is there, night is like the dawn. When your body is taken during communion, I live down my shame. But I do not consider my soul living, for death is inevitable. Nor do I consider it dead, for renewal is not doubted. And though I see the path to life closed before me because of my unpardonable sins still paradise is open before me because of the good news of salvation. For the discouragement of bad news makes me less anxious than the encouragement of your hand extending salvation. Therefore, grant mercy, O Lord, for all those who raise voices in thanks, Lord blessed forever. Amen. (Prayer 65E) ”

*"Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet."*

