

Christian Spiritual Disciplines

The Need for Discipline

The Pursuit of Discipline

- a. The entire book of Proverbs is written so we might learn discipline (Prov.1:1-7).
- b. If we lack discipline we are weak and vulnerable to attack (Prov. 25:28).

Discipline and wisdom are a continual pursuit that we must not give up or we may find ourselves failing to finish the race. Solomon didn't heed his own advice found in Prov. 19:27.

Discipline and Self-control in Scripture

- a. taxis*
- b. gymnasio*
- c. paideia*
- d. egkrateia*
- e. sophron*
- f. nepho*



Discipline: A Human Action or Divine Grace?

- a. We are instructed to *be* self-controlled and disciplined. It is obviously something which we play a part in developing. (2 Peter 1:5-6; Tit. 1:7-10)

Yet note above (Tit. 1:10) that the moralistic purists of “the circumcision group” are actually seen as rebellious and thus immoral! These are the very people who assert we must live according to the law. Cf. Col. 2:20-23

- b. On the other hand, self-discipline is a fruit of the Spirit and therefore a gift from God (2 Timothy 1:7; Gal 5:22-25).

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- c. Discipline in scripture is evidently a *personal characteristic* (1 Tim 3:2).

Notice the last line of Gal. 5:25 above “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” We must still regularly apply the truth of the Spirit in us.

Like James says of salvation, discipline it is a matter of both faith and works - faith being the manner in which we receive the ability to discipline ourselves, action being the way we respond to such grace. .

Foster – “The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so he can transform us (p. 7).”

Why Practice the Disciplines?

- a. We are divinely commanded to do so both implicitly, in the life of Jesus and the apostles, and explicitly, in direct exhortations (especially in the Epistles). Cf Luke 9:23.

Willard “We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives around the activities he himself practiced in order to remain constantly at home in the fellowship of his Father.”

Why Practice the Disciplines?

- a. We are divinely commanded to do so both implicitly, in the life of Jesus and the apostles, and explicitly, in direct exhortations (especially in the Epistles). Cf Luke 9:23.
- b. To obtain godliness (1 Tim. 4:7; 2 Peter 1:6) and to obtain christlikeness (Tit. 1:8).
- c. Discipline gives us hopefulness from our evil habits. We CAN change our habits. “Habitual sin.” Sin is a habit (1 Tim. 5:13; Heb. 10:25), a style of living; likewise, we can make righteousness a habit. Our very nature can become godly.

Instead of focusing on the negative aspect of godliness through “do not touch” we need to focus on the positive aspects of holiness, the actions we do make ourselves holy. If we make a habit of daily prayer and bible intake, meditation, and frequent fasting, etc. we will begin to naturally refrain from other sinful practices through the inner-working of the Holy Spirit as He transforms our minds. (Rom. 12:2)

Focus on starting new godly habits first and foremost, removing ungodly habits, which today seems so difficult, will often follow as a natural repercussion (and if they don't we will be better prepared to deal with them once we have godly habits in place). How can God trust us with large things if we are unfaithful in the little ones?

“Freedom is the reward of discipline.”

- d. A lack of discipline brings chaos into our lives and with it frustration and discouragement. A productive person is a disciplined person.
- e. The Spiritual Disciplines are a necessity for our Spirit – we need to shape up.

Whitney – “... the only road to Christian maturity and Godliness ... passes through the practice of the Spiritual Disciplines (p. 17).”