

## The Discipline of Discipleship

**KEY VERSES:** <sup>24</sup> Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. <sup>25</sup> And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. <sup>26</sup> I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: <sup>27</sup> But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. – I Corinthians 9:25-27

**MEMORY VERSE:** <sup>27</sup> But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. – I Corinthians 9:27

### What is Discipline?

Discipline means *control gained* by enforcing obedience or order. If discipline means a gaining of control, then a lack of discipline means a loss of control. It is safe to say if there is any area of our lives that lacks discipline, that area is literally out of control. And how can you truly follow Jesus when you are out of alignment with God's Word and His expectations for a life submitted to Christ?

Many times, we think that if I can do what I want to do, say what I want to say, and be how I want to be, then I am in control. But, if you lack the ability to enforce order and obedience to God, you do not have control. The reality is that you are not in control; instead, you allow your circumstances, people, things, your environment, or your situations to dictate what you do. So, all those external elements are in control of you, because there is no discipline. And where there is no discipline, there is no discipleship.

Imagine a line of elementary school students walking to their classroom from recess. Most times the students are following a "line leader". When there is discipline, students can walk one behind the other and follow the leader. But, what happens when we see another class of students with children jumping up and down, some of them yelling in the hallway, and others walking outside of the line? We may say "those students are OUT OF CONTROL"!

It is the same for some of us. There are members in the body of Christ who are exercising discipline and following Jesus in the "line" (discipleship). Then there are others in the body who are jumping around from place to place, from one theology to another ideology, jumping from one sin to the next, having all kinds of crazy conversation flow from our lips, and walking in and out of the line of salvation and discipleship. Those who are observing on the outside are saying "They are OUT OF CONTROL"!

Discipline is control; and in the context of discipleship and salvation, we must have **SELF**-discipline and **SELF**-control.

### Why Do We Need Discipline to Follow Jesus?

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to follow His example and His teachings. This is not an easy task because although Jesus experienced every temptation to sin just as we do, He did not fall into sin.

**For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. – Hebrews 4:15**

Although we strive to be more like Jesus every day, the reality is that we are not Jesus Himself. Our struggle is the same, yet different. Jesus was God in the flesh. He was born with God already in and throughout Him. We, on the other hand were born and shapen in iniquity.

**Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. – Psalm 51:5**

So, we need DISCIPLINE. Following Christ and being a disciple is not something that is automatic just because we confess with our mouth and believe in our heart that He is Lord. Discipline is required to LIVE THE LIFE. We must exercise *intentional* control over body. That is why we fight to “*bring it into subjection*”.

There is a war that is taking place in us every single day. There is a fight happening within that makes it a challenge to follow Christ and His teachings.

**14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. - Romans 7:14-25**

Paul said, “...*wretched man that I am! who will deliver me??!?!?*” JESUS (THE WORD)! The scripture shows us clearly that there is a serious war happening between our flesh (*animal nature, human nature; earthly nature of man apart from divine influence, and therefore prone to sin*) and the Spirit (*the Holy Spirit; part of God's nature that lives in us to guide, comfort, and direct*). The only way that the flesh will lose is through a life that is submitted to God and guided by the Word through discipline.

**You cannot have discipleship without discipline.** Without discipline, we will fail to follow Christ completely every time. We will be out of control and moved with every wind and wave, tossed to and fro. (*Ephesians 4:14*).

### **How Do I Become Disciplined?**

When thinking about discipline as an action, one meaning is to train or develop by instruction and exercise especially in self-control. Discipline in discipleship is about beating your Spirit into subjection, not just about following a set of rules. The discipline of discipleship comes through teaching, learning, and correction.

### ***TEACHING & LEARNING***

In order to master the discipline of discipleship, we must *receive* teaching about the principles of the Word of God, the gospel teachings of Jesus Christ, and Christ's ways. It is imperative in these last and evil days, that we learn of and understand the **WORD OF GOD FOR OURSELVES**. Knowing what you believe and why you believe it, will be a part of the anchor that keeps you grounded and following Jesus. The world is full of deceitful teachings, misleading philosophies, and twisted preaching. You must not only sit under **sound** teaching, but you must **STUDY FOR YOURSELF!**

**2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: 3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. – I Peter 2:2-3**

**Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. – II Timothy 2:15**

**2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall**

**they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; <sup>4</sup> And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. - II Timothy 4:2-4**

If I do not know the ways of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ, how can I become disciplined? How will I gain control of my flesh, when I don't even know the Word of God that teaches me about it? How can I follow Jesus' teachings and become a disciple, when I have no clue what His teachings are? We **MUST** be students of the Word of God!

### ***TRAINING & APPLICATION***

Discipline is training. When thinking of training, let's think of weight training or physical fitness. When you are training your physical body to gain muscle or lose weight, it requires consistency and pushing past points of comfort. That means to train my muscles to grow, I have to incorporate repetitions of weight lifting – I must do it over and over again. To lose weight, I must incorporate a consistent routine of exercise and eating properly – I must have a routine. Discipline through training requires repetition and routine.

The other part of training is that it will challenge you! Discipline is not supposed to be easy. Easy will keep you lazy and stagnant. Generally speaking, if the weight you are lifting is not challenging the muscle, you will not see growth or change. If the exercises you are doing are too easy, you will remain at the same weight. Discipline in discipleship challenges your thinking and your way of doing things. It challenges your faith to another level. It pushes you to grow the fruit of the Spirit.

If I am wanting a life that is submitted to Christ, and I desire to follow Him, the discipline requires training of my flesh. I must train my flesh to yield. I must read the Bible and study consistently. I must starve my flesh – over and over again. I have to create a routine that may challenge my comfort level, but will yield growth in the end. **NO PAIN, NO GAIN!** I train it with the Word of God! I train myself to “*study to be quiet*” (*I Thessalonians 4:11*). I train myself to “*give a soft answer*” (*Proverbs 15:1*). I train myself to “*love my neighbor as myself*” (*Matthew 22:39*). I train myself to “*flee fornication*” (*I Corinthians 6:18*) and to “*love the Lord with all my heart*” (*Matthew 22:37*). Is it easy all the time? **NO!** But that is why we need **DISCIPLINE!** And that is why Paul said we beat it into subjection. When will you begin your training?

When we discipline our mind to think differently, and our actions should begin to follow based on our knowledge of the Word of God. We begin beating that flesh into subjection through the Word of God. Discipline is about training, and training is about action. In order to be a true disciple, we must not only be a hearer and student of the Word, but we must also be a **DOER** of the Word.

**<sup>21</sup> Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. <sup>22</sup> But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. <sup>23</sup> For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: - James 1:21-23**

And the more we **DO** the Word, the more we become disciples of Christ.

### ***CORRECTION***

A final definition of discipline is to punish or penalize for the sake of enforcing obedience and perfecting moral character. As much as we may not feel like putting ourselves to work to train the flesh, having God to correct and punish us is the least favorite means of discipline.

**<sup>11</sup> Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. - Hebrews 12:11**

Sometimes, God's loving hand of correction is what comes down to get us back in line and under control. Why does He do it? He does it because He loves us, and He knows that a life without discipline is a life out of control. And a life out of control is a life headed towards destruction. God knows that it is in our best interest to take up the cross and follow Christ. So, if we don't choose to beat our own body into subjection, He will give us some assistance in doing so.

Do not turn away correction or view it in a negative light. Correction is necessary when we are moving in the wrong direction or following anything other than Christ.

**Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish. - Proverbs 12:1**

Discipline in Discipleship can also come through those God has set in leadership over us. As much as we may not like it or it may be uncomfortable, God will sometimes use people to help get us back in line. It is important that we do not allow pride and self-righteousness to get in the way of this mode of correction and discipline. Learn to accept correction in the love that it is given. To avoid and reject correction would be foolish.

**Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die. - Proverbs 15:10**

**Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. - Proverbs 9:8**

There is fruitfulness in discipline. There is safety in discipline. There is wisdom in discipline. And in discipline, we can find ourselves better followers of Christ.