



The Joys and Fruits of Discipline

Zoom Bible Study | Tuesdays @ 7:00pm (CST)



May 9, 2023

Lesson Two

We are on **the journey of the faithful steward**, learning to be more disciplined so that we are better stewards. The purpose of being a disciplined woman is to equip us to be good stewards for God.

If you start to put new disciplines or stronger disciplines into one area of your life, you will be encouraged and much more likely to put other disciplines into your life. In other words, disciplines beget disciplines. And the reverse is also true.

Remember:

Lack of discipline is self-inflicted suffering.

A Parable About Stewardship

This parable Jesus told is all about being a good steward.

Matthew 25:14 – 30

“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

¹⁹“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

²¹“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

²²“The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

²³“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

²⁴“Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

²⁶“His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

²⁸““So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

We often think of our "gold" as the money God has given us, but I would encourage you to think of it as the body God has given you, the time, the gifts and talents—everything that God has entrusted to you. He expects you to do much with whatever he has given you.

Ephesians 2:10: *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do.*

Everyday Disciplines

The Discipline of an Early Start on Your Day

"I'm not a morning person!" What does it mean when someone says, "I'm not a morning person"? How would you describe a morning person?

Morning Person or Night Owl?

People who are not morning people will usually quickly tell you they are "night owls." But the problem is, our days begin in the morning! Our jobs begin in the morning! Our responsibilities usually begin in the morning! So, even if you are a night owl, your morning hours are valuable hours that cannot always be replaced by night hours.

Your day is won or lost in the morning hours.

Is a morning person someone:

- who bounds out of bed at the first buzz of the alarm?
- or maybe someone who doesn't even need an alarm?
- whose first words each day are: "Oh, good, it's time to get up!"?
- who usually wakes up before the alarm goes off and shuts it off before it buzzes?
- who is cheerful right off the bat?
- who really detests staying in bed another minute or two, and just can't wait to start another day?

If that is the definition of a morning person, there are very few in the world today.

Why Get Up Early?

Here are some good reasons to get up early:

1. You'll typically get a lot more accomplished as an early riser.
2. You'll probably be in a better mood all day.
3. You'll be less stressed out because you didn't start your day in a hectic rush.
4. You'll be on time or - better still - early at your job, and your boss will love you for that.
5. You'll have a leg-up on the competition.
6. You'll find some true quiet time in the morning hours, for meditation, communication with God, and becoming centered for the day ahead.

What Is Early?

Who defines early, after all? Is there some magical hour that we all have to abide by, if we want to develop this discipline of getting up early?

No, it is not one size fits all. But you need to determine what "early" is for you. Consider these factors:

- How long does it take you to shower, dress, and perform all other necessary functions that make you look your best?
- How much time do you need to prepare and eat breakfast?
- How much time does your family require of you in the mornings? Such things as helping kids get ready for school, having needed time for communication with your mate, etc.

- How much time do you want to spend communicating with God through prayer and Bible reading each morning in order to be spiritually prepared to meet the day?
- How much time does it take you to get to work, or wherever you must be for that first appointment/duty?

The point is you need to determine what is “get up early time” for you.

Perhaps you don’t have to be somewhere at a certain time. May I suggest that you still need an early getup time. But if you don’t set some guidelines for your life in retirement, you will find yourself slipping toward being less and less disciplined and that won’t be much fun.

Find a reason—a good reason—to get up at a certain early time.

Ignore Your Feelings

Please don't wait until you feel like getting up early because you probably won't! Learn to ignore your tendency to rationalize an excuse. Here are our most common excuses for not getting up early:

- I got up early yesterday, so that lets me off the hook today.
- I had a hard day yesterday - or a late-night last night - so I deserve to stay in bed longer.
- Five more minutes won't hurt!
- I don't feel good, so I need some extra rest.
- Nobody else is up so why should I get up!
- I don't want to wake up others, so I'll stay in bed until someone else gets up.

What are some other excuses you use to avoid getting up when you know you should?

Take Time to Look Good

Unless you’re sick or have an occasional “pajama day,” even if you work from home or you don’t have to go out in public for that day, make yourself look good. I promise, you will feel better about yourself and be motivated more if you dress yourself in a way that says, “I have something to do today. It is important. I need to look good for this day.” Do it for yourself, even if nobody else sees you all day long. I promise—it will make a difference in how you feel about yourself and how productive you are.

Put a Plan In Place

Begin with baby steps and build toward your goal.

Gimmicks for Implementation

Come up with stratagems or gimmicks for yourself, to trick yourself—or better still—to train yourself to put needed disciplines in your life. Here are some practical “tricks” to play on yourself to help you get up early:

1. Put the alarm clock or your phone out of arm's reach of your bed, so that you are forced to get up in order to turn it off.
2. Ask a friend to call or text you early each day.
3. Make yourself accountable to someone that you will see early in your day. Give that person permission to ask you "What time did you get up today?"
4. Write on your daily calendar or keep track on your phone what time you get up each day.
5. When you have reached your desired get up early goal and stuck to it for five or seven straight days, reward yourself.

The Rewards of Early Rising

The Psalmist wrote:

Satisfy me in the morning with your unfailing love, that I may sing for joy and be glad all day long (Psalm 90:14).

I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble (Psalm 59:16).

Your day is won or lost in the morning hours.

Here are some of the rewards of getting up early:

- It rids you of that cloud of guilt which hovers over you when you know you started your day off the wrong way.
- It allows you to prepare for the day ahead, both mentally, physically and spiritually, and therefore you will handle whatever happens that day far better.
- It motivates you to be productive and accomplish your goals for the day.
- It makes you a much better time manager because you have some extra time to manage!
- It gives you a sense of being in control of your day, instead of your day being in control of you.

This discipline is one of the best gifts you'll ever give to yourself.

The Discipline of Good Eating Habits

First, this is not about a diet and it is most definitely not about getting or staying thin!

Excuses for Not Eating Right

- I'm in a rush and eating on the run, so I just have to take whatever is available fast.
- I travel a great deal and it's very difficult to have a good diet when you have to eat out a lot.
- I eat a much better diet than _____.
- I have to cook for my family, and they insist on all that bad food, so I have no choice.
- My kids/husband/roommate won't eat vegetables or fruit, so we never buy it.
- One of these days they'll prove that fried food is good for you; just wait and see!
- My grandfather ate anything he wanted; his diet was full of grease and pork and beef, and he lived to be 95. I don't have to worry about what I eat because of my good genes.
- I'm not overweight, so I don't need to worry about what I eat.

Eating Right Is a Spiritual Matter

What you put into your body—food, drink, medicine, drugs, whatever—is a spiritual matter if you are a Christ-follower, and here is the reason:

1 Corinthians 6:19 – 20

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Imagine if we started our days with this prayer:

“Lord, today I want to honor you with my body. Please remind me all day long that my body is the temple of your Spirit. Help me to be a good steward of your body—the one you bought at a price—because I belong to you and I want you to say ‘Well done’ when this day is over.”

I know there is ample proof that many people eat as a substitute—to meet some emotional need. Here are a couple of books that address food addictions for Christians that you may find helpful if that is a struggle for you.

- *Don't Give the Enemy a Seat at Your Table* – by Louie Giglio
- *Made To Crave: Satisfying Your Deepest Desire with God, Not Food* – Lysa TerKeurst

Find What Works for You

Here are some suggestions:

1. Start observing when you tend to eat too much.
2. Start observing what bad foods you are most prone to eat.
3. Start observing what time of day you tend to eat too much or the wrong things.
4. Start asking yourself if you are eating because you are really hungry—or not!

Formulate a plan for yourself to start working at eating better. For example:

- Clean out your cupboards and refrigerator. Get rid of the foods that are really bad for you.
- Stop buying the bad foods that you know you should not eat.
- Don't shop for food when you're hungry.
- Replace the bad foods with good ones.
- Limit how much you will eat.
- Don't eat if you're not hungry.
- Set time limits for eating.
- Make yourself accountable.
- Reward yourself occasionally.

As you learn to deny yourself something you want to eat, you are learning the biblical principle that Jesus taught us—to deny ourself.

Luke 9:23: *Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."*

This is what the Apostle Paul was talking about in his letter to the Corinthian church.

1 Corinthians 9:24 – 27

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. ²⁶ Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Notice that Paul has a goal in mind, and this goal controls his behavior. He recognizes that the demands of his body can at times prevent him from running his race in order to win. Therefore, he disciplines his body.

And so we must learn to say to our bodies, "NO!"

- No, you can't have that to eat.
- No, you can't stay in bed any longer.
- No, you can't lay on the couch all day.
- No, you can't be lazy.
- No, you can't refuse to get needed exercise.

We have a higher goal than our own short-term comfort. This requires faith—we do it by faith that God will give us the power to do it.

Colossians 3:23 – 24: *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

What do you recognize as your own weaknesses—places where you find it difficult to discipline your body? We know that part of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control, and self-control is another word for discipline. It is a fruit of THE Spirit, not your spirit. Start with one everyday discipline; start right away, don't delay; start with baby steps. . . **but start!** Pray your way through it.