

The Joy of Discipline

Air Dates: June 5 - 9, 2023

Day One

If you made a list of all your favorite words, would “discipline” be one of them? I rather doubt it; I don’t think it would make my list. To me, discipline is a chore, a major chore, and if I could find some way to get through life without it, accomplishing what I want to accomplish, believe me, I would try.

So why am I talking about discipline, and why would I title this series “The Joy of Discipline”? Because even though we don’t like the word and what it represents so much, the truth is: Discipline is necessary. It’s necessary, that is, if you truly want to accomplish something worthwhile in your life and reach your objectives. It’s necessary if you want to turn your dreams into accomplishments. It’s necessary if you’re not willing to settle for mediocrity or mundaneness.

And let me just make one point which is so very critical:

Lack of discipline is self-inflicted suffering!

Discipline is not fun—at least not all the time! But, if you refuse to impose discipline on yourself, you will inflict suffering on yourself. As someone has said, “We must all suffer from one of two pains: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret. The difference is discipline weighs ounces while regret weighs tons.”

So, choosing discipline over regrets makes for joy! There is joy in being a disciplined person. Here are some verses from Proverbs that tell us the value of discipline:

"For this command is a lamp, this teaching is a light, and correction and instruction are the way to life" (Proverbs 6:23).

"Whoever disregards discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honored" (Proverbs 13:18).

"Those who disregard discipline despise themselves, but the one who heeds correction gains understanding" (Proverbs 15:32).

Wise Solomon points out that discipline brings understanding and honor, avoids poverty and shame, and is the way to life. Imposing needed disciplines is guaranteed by God’s Word to make wonderful, joyful changes in your life.

Of course, that takes intentionality—you have to make it happen. I’m going to give you some easy, practical suggestions that may help you impose discipline where you need it. I will be sharing from my own struggles and failures and—believe it or not—successes. I am living proof that anyone can acquire discipline!

Day Two

Would you describe yourself as a disciplined person? Did you know that there is joy in being disciplined? If that seems like an oxymoron—how could discipline be joyful?—hang with me and you'll see what I mean. First, it might be good to define exactly what I mean by being disciplined. Here's a good definition:

"Discipline is the ability to make yourself do something you don't want to do in order to get a result you really want to get."

That's what I mean by discipline. I have to impose discipline on myself because it is not natural or easy for me. But I've lived long enough to know that without imposing discipline in my life, I'll never get the results I want. However, even more importantly, I'll never do all the good works God planned for me to do without being disciplined.

Here's a discipline that makes a difference in your day-to-day responsibilities and in your spiritual welfare as well. And that is the discipline of getting up early enough each day to start your day right, to have time to read your Bible and pray about the day ahead, to get started without stress and chaos.

You know, your day is won or lost in the morning hours. Are you able to make yourself get out of that bed so that you can get the result you want for the day? Oh, I think I can hear someone saying, "But I'm not a morning person!" Okay—maybe it's true that you are more of a night owl but here's the thing: Your day begins early—at least for most of us—and if you don't take advantage of those early hours, you're missing a great opportunity to get a real jump on your day.

So, let me encourage you to impose this discipline of getting up early enough to begin your day right. The Psalmist put it this way:

"Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days" (Psalm 90:14).

Getting up early will help you sing for joy and be glad all day. Try it!

Day Three

I know it's not your favorite topic but the importance of being disciplined is one of the most important keys to your success in life. I read this somewhere: "The undisciplined are slaves to moods, appetites and passions." Wow, that's rather strong, isn't it? But there's truth in it. This is how the Bible puts it in Proverbs 5:22-23:

"The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare them; the cords of their sins hold them fast. For lack of discipline they will die, led astray by their own great folly."

That's pretty strong, I would say. It says that lack of discipline holds you fast in the cords of sin and can cause death. Obviously, being a disciplined person is a spiritual issue for us as Christ-followers.

A discipline that impacts your success is eliminating the bad habit of procrastination. You know, putting off until tomorrow what you should do today. Does that ring a bell with you?

I don't have to explain the problems you create for yourself when you procrastinate, right? Things pile up, you miss critical deadlines, and when you finally get around to doing what you're supposed to do, you're in such a rush you do a bad job. And that's just for starts.

Here is a sure-fire cure for procrastination. Ready? *Whatever you have to do today that you don't want to do, do it first!* I promise it works because it has worked for me for years. It's simple and it works. Now, I know you can't always do that dreaded thing first but do it as soon as you can. Get it behind you. It sets you free for the rest of the day.

And here's another suggestion: Take a big job and break it into small parts, put a time frame for each part and then do one small piece at a time. When a job is big, it discourages you because it looks like mission impossible. But you can succeed one piece at a time.

So, I want to encourage you not to be a slave to procrastination. You won't believe how good you'll feel when you get those things done that you really don't want to do—and you do it right. Just do it now and do it right. You'll be glad you did.

Day Four

Though it may sound too good to be true, I assure you there is joy in putting needed disciplines in your life. But like everything that is worthwhile, it takes some commitment and work on our part. I remind you that we must all suffer from one of two pains: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret.

I want to mention two good work habits that will go a long way toward making you successful:

Being on Time

Do you have difficulty being on time? Maybe it's because you don't get up early enough—which we talked about earlier. If your morning routine is rush, rush, rush because you don't get out of bed until the last minute, then you see how lack of discipline in one area spills over to other areas of your life. And being habitually late does not show a Christ-like thoughtfulness of others and their time.

Whatever excuses you have come up with to justify always being late, if you're willing to become disciplined, you will greatly reduce the stress in your life. We perpetuate most of our stress by our lack of discipline, and this is one of those examples of unnecessary stress caused by tardiness.

Put some reminders in place; set your phone or watch to remind you when you need to be on time. Figure out what you have to do to break this bad habit and impose that discipline on yourself. Do it for a week and see what a difference it makes. You'll be hooked.

Keeping Promises and Commitments

This is the second good work habit that will make a difference. The Bible says: "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2).

When you make a promise or commitment, others are trusting you to keep it—right? So, you must prove faithful—not an option. In Ecclesiastes we read: "It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it" (Ecclesiastes 5:5). Another way to put that is "Under promise and over deliver." Promise keeping requires discipline. It takes carefully keeping a record of whatever you've promised to do, and then just doing it as you promised. Simple, but it takes discipline and it will give back great rewards when you do. You'll be happy—joyful—that you were disciplined.

Day Five

If self-discipline could be measured, would you measure up? I've been reminding you that being a disciplined person is essential for success, and it certainly is a requirement for us as followers of Jesus Christ. Discipline is a spiritual issue. We will be accountable to the Lord for the use of our time, our skills and our resources, and you have to be disciplined to do that well.

I read this recently: "Stop looking for ways to boost your motivation. Success doesn't come from having more motivation. It comes from doing what you need to do, even if you don't have the motivation to do it. It's called DISCIPLINE."

This says that discipline must be imposed in our lives whether we feel like it or not. If your discipline depends on the mood you're in, or whether you got a good night's sleep or not, or if you just don't feel so good, you will be a very sporadically disciplined person—on and off; hot and cold; inconsistent. As I said before, "Discipline is the ability to make yourself do something you don't want to do in order to get a result you really want to get."

Hebrews 12:11 says: "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

Becoming a more disciplined person means you will have a more peaceful life and the fruit of discipline will make you more mature in your faith. Discipline comes in many forms but any time you decide to be more disciplined in some needed area, you will grow spiritually and you will be more pleasing to the Lord.

If you need lots of discipline in your life, take baby steps—one thing at a time—because as you are successful in one area, you will want to be successful in others as well. You have much to look forward to—much peace and joy—as you become more and more disciplined in your life. So, choose the pain of discipline and not the pain of regret.