

Wisdom on Discipline

Presented by Lisa Bishop

Air Dates: September 18 - 22, 2023

Day One

Have you ever found yourself living in regret? Maybe you have made a poor decision or series of not so wise choices and now you are paying the price so to speak?

The other day I was sitting in a coffee shop waiting to meet up with a friend when I noticed a pen sitting on the table in front of me. I could tell that it had something written on it so I picked it up, and scribed on the side were the words, "**I choose the pain of discipline over the pain of regret.**" I think it was a slogan for a weight loss program but as I read those words I thought, "Wow, what a great motto for life."

Whether you want to lose 30 pounds, improve your sleep habits, learn a new language or land a promotion, achieving your goals will require discipline. **Choosing what you want most over what you want now.**

That requires something that we all find challenging at times, delayed gratification. "I really want that donut, but I want better physical health more." "I want to scroll on social media before bedtime but getting eight hours of sleep is more important to me." "I want to do just enough to get by at work but my greater desire is career advancement." **What you want over the long haul will require you to kick in some self-restraint in the here and now.** It will call upon you to resist short-term temptation for the longer-term satisfaction of reaching your goals.

First Corinthians 10:13 is a verse I memorized years ago that is my go to reminder in times when my self-control is tested.

"The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure" (1 Corinthians 10:13 NLT).

Did you notice that? "Not "if" you are tempted but "when" you are tempted!" **Being lured into less than helpful habits is a part of life, but you have the faithfulness of God to help you by the power of his Holy Spirit.**

A fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control which means you have the ability to master your desires, passions, and appetite! I know it is easier said than done. And if we get a little honest, sometimes we don't want to forgo a desire in the now because it feels good. **But as a follower of Jesus, you are not to be ruled by your feelings and impulses.** So, when you are lured into a behavior that you know will not be beneficial in the long run, remember, choose the pain of discipline *now* over the pain of regret later.

Day Two

In the Bible, discipline refers to moral training, instruction, and correction; and the outcome is spiritual

growth, character development, and Christian maturity. **Discipline is not meant to be a killjoy.** Quite the opposite. As Hebrews 12:11 says, *“No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it’s painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.”*

While all of God’s Word is full of rich and practical training and instruction for our everyday lives the book of Proverbs is solely dedicated to this end. The opening verses of Proverbs say,

Their purpose is to teach people wisdom and discipline, to help them understand the insights of the wise. Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives, to help them do what is right, just, and fair. These proverbs will give insight to the simple, knowledge and discernment to the young. Let the wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. Let those with understanding receive guidance by exploring the meaning in these proverbs and parables, the words of the wise and their riddles. Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. (Proverbs 1:1-7, NLT).

The bottom line in these opening verses is don’t be a fool, respect and revere the Lord, desire wisdom and discipline.

The book of Proverbs is a reminder that you must be in the Word of God, meditating on biblical truths, so that you grow in wisdom and spiritual maturity. **This devotional is a spiritual snack; but make sure you make time to feast on the Scriptures so that your character in Christ grows and you reap the full benefits of thriving as a beloved daughter or son of God.**

And when it comes to discipline and character development, in addition to spending time hanging out in the Word, also be mindful of who you hang out with. As Proverbs 1:10 warns, *“My child, if sinners entice you, turn your back on them!”* **In other words, if someone’s lifestyle and behaviors draw you away from Jesus, reevaluate your relationships.** Studies have shown that you are the average of the five people you are with the most. Who you spend time with influences the person you eventually become. The kind of people you interact with has an impact on your thoughts, beliefs and behaviors. **So be disciplined and invest time in the Word, and be vigilant with who you do life with. Choose your companions wisely.**

Day Three

What is your state of mind?

The other day I came across a picture some friends had snapped while standing under a neon sign that read, “Sunshine state of mind.” Being in Florida, otherwise known as “The Sunshine State,” I thought the sign was a clever play on words. It also got me thinking. **What state is your mind in?**

If you take intentional time to consider where your head space is these days, what would you say? In other words, what is your mental state? **What thoughts has your mind been fixing on?** These are important questions to ask yourself because the thoughts you dwell on, your mindset, what you set your mind on, matters. **The thoughts you allow yourself to linger on will not only impact the quality of your life but the trajectory of it too.** Because where your thoughts go your life will follow.

The apostle Paul talks about the importance of paying attention to the state of your mind in 2 Corinthians 10:5: *“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*

Take captive every thought. Here Paul is calling out anything that comes against the gospel of Jesus Christ, the truth of God’s Word, and he makes it clear that your thoughts are one type of stronghold that can hold you hostage. **In other words, any false thinking, every thought you have that is not in alignment with the truth of who God is, who you are, how you see others, are to be obliterated**

and made obedient to Jesus. And, as you realign your mind to come under the authority of Christ, you encourage others to do the same.

Your mind is a battleground, and you must make sure that you don't allow Satan's deceptions to gain a foothold. **Your thoughts can become a fortress holding you captive to false thinking.** Jesus wants you to submit your thoughts to him so that he rules your thoughts rather than you being ruined by the enemy!

So, what is your state of mind? Are you dwelling on thoughts of defeat, unworthiness, jealousy, anger, pity, superiority? What thoughts are holding you captive and running your life that need to be held captive and made obedient to Christ? **This is a friendly reminder to expose every wrong thought by the light of Scripture and in every single place you encounter wrong thinking, fight against that with the truth of God's Word.** Discipline your mind.

Day Four

Are you living free?

The other day I was sitting in my kitchen with some friends having a conversation about our teen-aged years and some of the stupid things we did. I didn't become a follower of Jesus until I was in my 20's so I had plenty of time to live my version of "freedom" and make choices that I would later look back on with regret. And not that you must be young to be foolish. **There are plenty of unwise decisions we can make, and temptations we can fall into, even as adult followers of Jesus.**

We live in a world that says, "Follow your impulses." "Do what feels good in the moment." "Act on what is right for you." And we call this freedom. The dictionary defines freedom as, "Being able or allowed to do, say, think, whatever you want to, without being controlled or limited." **But true freedom is not the liberty to do as you please. True freedom requires discipline.**

To say that there is freedom in discipline can almost sound like an oxymoron. But in his letter to the Church in Rome the Apostle Paul alludes to the impact of the lack of discipline that leads to false freedom and ultimately leads to sin.

"As long as you did what you felt like doing, ignoring God, you didn't have to bother with right thinking or right living, or right anything for that matter. But do you call that a free life? What did you get out of it? Nothing you're proud of now. Where did it get you? A dead end" (Romans 6:20-21, MSG).

The world says, "Do what you want, when you want," and calls it freedom. Jesus looks at satisfying the flesh as sin and calls it bondage.

In Galatians 5:1 Paul emphatically says, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." **You are a slave to whatever you let master you and influence your actions, words, and behavior.** When it comes to true liberation, true freedom, it will require you to omit things in your life that do not reflect your salvation. **Or said in another way, discipline yourself to get rid of unprincipled choices that gratify the flesh and do not reflect the holiness of God.**

Where in your life is lack of discipline crippling your freedom in Christ? What thoughts or actions are ruling you rather than being guided by God and put under the authority of Jesus? **It is for freedom that Christ has set you free!** Confess to God and thank him that his Holy Spirit not only guides you but empowers you to live a life of true liberty through the discipline of freedom.

Day Five

If you were to take a step back and notice some of the habits in your life, what would you see? The other day I got out of bed at my typical 6am wake-up time. For the past several years I have disciplined myself to get up early, and now I don't even need an alarm clock. That has not always been the case! **It required creating habits one day and action at a time.** I've also made it my daily morning routine to drink a glass of water and read my Bible, and workout three or four times week for 30 minutes. Getting in some physical activity in the morning helps me tremendously not only physically but also mentally and emotionally.

If I am honest sometimes the last thing I want to do is roll out of bed and pull up a HIIT video on YouTube. **But in those moments, if I do what I feel like doing instead of staying the course, committed to my goals, it can be easy for me to fall off the workout wagon and lack the diligence of being disciplined.**

As you reflect on your life, what area might be suffering due to a lack of discipline? In other words, what habits are working for you...or not? **Some habits in your life are productive and beneficial and some are downright destructive and can detour you from the person you want to be and the goals you want to achieve.** For example, creating the habit of eating healthy and working out can prove to be beneficial. The habit of being reactive and easily offended or angered, not so much. Repeated actions, reactions, and choices become engrained and turn into habits whether intentional or not.

When you consciously and deliberately exert discipline, you train yourself to establish desired habits that lead to desired outcomes in your life, work, and relationships. **And as a follower of Jesus, you need to discipline yourself with the truth of God's Word so that your character is molded and shaped to Jesus and your behaviors reflect his divine nature.**

For example, are you in the habit of extending forgiveness or do you hold onto resentment? Do you practice humility or are you prideful or boastful? **Are you easily put off if someone has a differing viewpoint or opinion or do you listen and show respect for the other person?** When a person does or says something that needs to be addressed, do you demonstrate courage and have direct conversations, or do you gossip about them behind their back?

Ultimately as followers of Jesus, we should lead disciplined lives—set apart from the patterns of the world. Not only does your spiritual thriving count on it, but your witness does also. If you have behaviors that mimic the sinfulness of the world, your spiritual ability to reach others is lost. Instead, strive to be a signpost to Jesus and live a disciplined life. A life of holiness that shines in the darkness and stands in contrast to the behavior of the surrounding culture. **As you live disciplined and set apart in your lifestyle, you will draw attention to Jesus.**