

The Discipline of Discipleship

Ours Is An Undisciplined Age!

The dictionary says that discipline is: *“Teaching, or instruction; that which is taught to pupils; training that corrects, molds, strengthens, or perfects. To bring order, rule or system of rules that affect conduct or action; to develop by instruction or exercise; to train in self-control or obedience to given standards.”*

For some weeks I want to share a series on disciplines, and I trust that these thoughts (and study) will be helpful to you. So I will be sharing about the various *disciplines of the soul, mind, and heart* as we seek to live for Christ.

The old disciplines are breaking down, and the foundations of society appear to be crumbling. The discipline of the home seems to be vanishing in the new psychology which teaches: parents obey your children! The discipline of the schoolroom is becoming anathema, lest the personality of the child be thwarted by the imposition of a will higher than his own. The old academic disciplines: mathematics, ancient language, grammar, are being ignored as obsolete and unimportant. Above all, the discipline of divine grace is derided as legalism or it entirely unknown to a generation that is largely illiterate to the Scriptures.

We need the rugged strength of Christian character that can come only from discipline: the discipline of the spirit, of mind, of body, of society! Otherwise, the home will lose its heart as well as its hearth, the schoolroom its strength, the textbooks their exactness, the Scriptures their sanction and authority.

Discipleship means discipline! When we came to Christ for salvation, we became a disciple. A disciple in the fullest sense of the word is a disciplined person or he cannot be a disciple! The word, disciple, is used over 200 times in the New Testament. God’s will is that we would be trained and taught by the Master, that in being born again into His family (John 1:11-13), we would yearn for truth, learning, and training by our Savior through the Scriptures.

Without discipline we are not disciples, even though we profess His Name and pass for a follower of the Savior. *In this age of liberty and license (which has replaced law and loyalty), there is a greater need than ever before that we be disciplined to be His disciples.*

1. *Discipline requires the discipline of conversion.* We have neglected the truth that mankind must obey the gospel! The Scriptures are very clear as to what we must do in order to become His child. (Rom. 10:9-13) Christ became the author of eternal life to those who obey Him. (Heb. 5:7-10) To admit our sin, repentance and faith require our submission to the truth of our lostness. We must recognize our low estate of rebellion against God, and in repentance come to Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:1-3; Luke 13:1-3; Acts 17:30; 20:21)

We as sheep have gone astray, we have turned to our own way; we have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Isa. 53:6; Rom. 3:23). *“We are by nature the children of wrath, even as others. . . strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and*

without God in the world." Eph. 2:3, 12)

This discipline is difficult for the natural heart in each one of us for we do not readily humble ourselves to admit our sin and shame. It requires an honest and good heart to see ourselves in the light of Calvary's Sacrifice for sin. Peter saw himself in the light of the Lord's presence and power, and falling down he said, "*Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*" (Luke 7:48, 50)

2. *Discipleship requires the discipline of cost.* Think about the words of the Lord Jesus when He said, "*He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*" (Matt. 10:37) We are to love and cherish those of our family, but Christ above all. We are to make our Lord Jesus supreme, permanent, preeminent in our hearts, so that no person or anything shares that place in our lives. No price of parents or loved ones, possessions or life itself is too great for His sake. (Col. 1:18)

This denial of all, including ourselves, is the deepest discipline of discipleship. Nothing should be dearer to us than God the Heavenly Father, Christ, the Son, or the Holy Spirit. For Him and His cause we should have died to every earthly creature or pleasure -- it is Jesus only! Our Lord does not desire that we take this discipline lightly or thoughtlessly. He gives two strong illustrations about counting the cost -- (Luke 14:28-33) and concludes with: "*So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*"

3. *Discipleship requires the discipline of cross-bearing!* Our Lord said, "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.*" (Luke 9:23; Matt. 16:24) Three things are a part of daily life -- daily food, our daily work, and our daily cross bearing. Christ is not speaking of some outward cross to be worn around the neck or in some other form. It is a denial of self, in the deepest sense of that word and of all that life has to offer, in full surrender to the will of God, in the spirit of Calvary's Cross, to be sure.

Because of His Cross, we are to daily crucify self (Gal. 2:20). We are to be crucified unto the world and all that is therein of good or evil. To bear our cross, because of His love--is to learn of Him, the Meek and Lowly in heart, and to be truly His disciples. Paul spoke of dying daily for he knew what it meant to submit ALL to the Lord (I Cor. 15:31; Rom. 14:9) and he knew what it meant to live Galatians 2:20.