

DISCIPLⁱⁿE

Part II

. . . We either live life the best that we can or, by developing spiritual “muscles” through Christian DISCIPLinEs, find the grace of God for this and our eternal life! What we, ourselves, cannot do, God will do by His grace – but we need to see our needs and seek grace to meet these needs.

In fact, most people fail at these important spiritual DISCIPLinEs because they fail at the physical, mundane, routine, everyday, ordinary and simple foundations for the spiritual DISCIPLinEs:

Getting enough sleep.
Eating sensibly.
Staying in reasonable shape.

. . .

Spiritual DISCIPLinEs have physical underpinnings that are as vital as the spiritual: Loving your wife and children as the Bible outlines this blessing and responsibility, reading your Bible – **EVERY** day, praying, listening for and to the Voice of God, giving for the greater resulting blessings that result, finding a good Church . . .

And the reason they don’t accomplish the necessary physical disciplines? Largely because they don’t “budget” for them or give them thought – they simply are not priorities. “I would like to spend more time with the family, BUT . . .,” “I would like to get enough sleep IF it did not interfere with what I want to do.” “I really wish I had the time to work out, but I don’t.” “It’s too much trouble to think about what I am eating – and what I could eat that would be better for me.” Blah, blah, blah.

DISCIPLinEs will NOT be accomplished without thinking and a dedication of time – in fact, one of the most exciting aspects of good DISCIPLinEs is not only in the positives that follow, but also (if they are well thought-out) in the less important things they replace. If, for example, a person wants to start a good rest or exercise program they MUST “dedicate” the time to it – otherwise, at some point they will stop because of the time conflicts. You have to set aside the necessary time for this purpose – must budget for it.

A good rest or exercise discipline will not only accomplish the good for which it is intended, if the time is taken “from the bottom of the barrel,” it will have a double (or triple) benefit. Watching TV, in and of itself, is not bad – but too many of us watch too much of it! If you take, say, 30 minutes a day, previously spent watching TV, to develop an exercise DISCIPLinE, you will have a 1 hour benefit – 30 minutes in exercising and 30 less minutes of TV. Or taking an hour from the TV, to go to sleep earlier, will provide a 2-hour benefit – an hour less of TV and an hour more rest. And, at some point, maybe we will have a better physical foundation that allows for developing or enhancing spiritual DISCIPLinEs – a third benefit from a single DISCIPLinE! Who says $2 + 2 = 4$?

The bottom line? In spite of good intentions, few develop good spiritual DISCIPLinEs because they do not start at the beginning of the DISCIPLinE-making process:

- Establishing the foundational physical DISCIPLInEs that permit spiritual DISCIPLInEs to be accomplished (“budgeting” the time for sleep and rest – which is about as easy as deciding when you need to go to sleep so you can wake up rested).
- Setting aside the time to “do” the DISCIPLInE so that, mentally, the time is already “spent.”
- Not using “feelings” as THE stimulus for doing DISCIPLInEs – when feelings are the motivation for DISCIPLInEs they are far harder to do and seldom last very long. Good DISCIPLInEs are decisions made to replace something lesser with something better and to keep “working” the DISCIPLInE even (and especially) when you don’t feel like it! “Doing” a DISCIPLInE when you don’t feel like it is several times more valuable than when you do feel like it! It is good to be excited about your DISCIPLInEs, but the point is simply that all DISCIPLInEs go through up and down periods – and most people quit at the first down.

So, again, Go For It! But don’t be fooled -- important DISCIPLInEs have as vital (even if of lesser importance) preceding DISCIPLInEs that must be exercised to accomplish the greater!