PART FOUR – THE PRIZE

Becoming a Woman of excellence

CHAPTER SIX

MOLDED BY DISCIPLINE

“Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.”

Proverbs 23:12 KJV

Jesus Christ is the perfect example of the disciplined person. When the need of the hour was to fast, He was able to fast; when feasting was appropriate, He was free to feast. When teaching was needed, He always had the life-giving message; when silence was appropriate, He had the power to “speak not a word.”

“In contrast to the rigidity of the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus was always responsive to the word of the Father. He was able to disregard ‘the traditions of men’ when the appropriate response was to obey ‘the word of God.’ When a perfect sacrifice was needed for our redemption, Jesus was free to despise the shame and become ‘obedient unto death on a cross.’ When we see Jesus, we understand that discipline is liberating, life-giving, jubilant.”

The Necessity of Discipline

1. Proverbs 25:28 tells us, “A person without self-control is as defenseless as a city with broken-down walls.” How does lack of self-control leave you defenseless?

   a. Proverbs 23:13 tells us to apply your heart to discipline. When you think of discipline, what comes to your mind?

   b. How does the dictionary define discipline? (Proverbs 25:28)

2. A good outline for 2 Peter 1:2-8 could be power, promises, and practice. Read these verses carefully. What is God’s part and what is our part in our growth in faith? (See also 2 Timothy 1:7 and Galations 5:22-23.)

   Add to your faith virtue . . . (2 Peter 1:5). “Add” means there is something we have to do. We are in danger of forgetting that we cannot do what God does, and that God will not do what we can do. We cannot save ourselves nor sanctify ourselves, God does that; but God will not give us good habits, He will not give us character, He will not make us walk aright. We have to do all that ourselves, we have to work out the salvation God has worked in. “Add” means to get into the habit of doing things.  

   Oswald Chambers
3. Below are verses that use different Greek words for discipline. Look up the verses and write the English equivalent found in your Bible translation in the column below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>English Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Titus 2:5</td>
<td>sophron</td>
<td>(to be of sound mind)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romans 12:3</td>
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<td>2 Timothy 1:7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Galatians 5:23</td>
<td>enkrateia</td>
<td>(power over oneself)</td>
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<td>2 Peter 1:6</td>
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<td>1 Timothy 4:7</td>
<td>gymnazo</td>
<td>(train)</td>
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<td>Hebrews 5:14</td>
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We would do well to think of the Christian life as the path of disciplined Grace. It is discipline, because there is work for us to do. It is Grace, because the life of God which we enter into is a gift which we can never earn. Lovingly God works his life into us by Grace alone, joyfully we hammer out the reality of this new life on the anvil of discipline. Remember, discipline in and of itself does not make us righteous; it merely places us before God. Having done this, discipline has reached the end of its tether. The transformation . . . is God’s work.  

Richard Foster

Areas of Discipline: Our Mind

4. In Romans 12:2 we read, “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,” i.e. let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. God has given us specific instructions concerning our minds. What are we asked to do in the following verses?

   Isaiah 26:3

   2 Corinthians 10:5

   Colossians 3:2

Why do you think such emphasis is placed on the mind?

5. Read Romans 8:6-8. What do these verses say about the mind?

   This passage [Romans 8:6-8] makes it abundantly clear that the way one thinks is intimately related to the way one lives, whether in Christ, in the Spirit and by faith, or alternatively in the flesh, in sin and in spiritual death.
It is sometimes thought that the emotions are the governing power in our nature. But I think all of us know, as a matter of practical experience, that there is something within us, behind our emotions and behind our wishes, an independent self, that, after all, decides everything and controls everything. Our emotions belong to us, and are suffered and enjoyed by us, but they are not ourselves; and if God is to take possession of us, it must be into this central will or personality that He enters.

_Hannah Whitall Smith_

6. Our response to God should never be contingent upon how we feel. From the following passages, write down the instances you find in which the psalmist exercised his will.

Psalm 101:1-4

Psalm 119:101, 173

**Our Emotions**

Christian psychologist Larry Crabb teaches that right thinking and right behavior lead to right feelings. Our emotions are consequences of our thinking and actions. So it is important that we discipline our minds and wills. When we have been hurt or rejected, though, our emotions can overpower us and we can feel helpless. I have found it helpful to immediately acknowledge exactly how I feel to God. After I have let Him know my feelings, I am usually able to exercise my will and choose to think the truth. Often the truth I need to remind myself of is that God loves me and is for me and that He will guide me in doing what is needed and what is right.

7. One of the best ways of handling our emotions is to fully acknowledge our feelings to God. Read Psalm 109. David was angry, hurt, and felt rejected. Write down any observations you can make about David’s expression of emotion to God.

What conclusions resulted after David’s time with God (verses 30-31)?

_The discipline of emotions is the training of responses._  
_Elisabeth Elliot_

8. In Lamentations, Jeremiah acknowledges his feelings to God also. Read through Lamentations 3:1-26.

a. What were Jeremiah’s feelings before verse 21?

b. What was Jeremiah’s _thinking_ after verse 21?

(Note the importance of not dwelling on our feelings but of exercising our wills to think the truth.)
Cease to consider your emotions, for they are only the servants; and regard simply your will, which is the real king in your being. Is that given up to God? Does your will decide to believe? Does your will choose to obey? ... And when you have got hold of this secret ... that you need not attend to your emotions but simply to the state of your will, all the Scripture commands to yield yourself to God, to present yourself a living sacrifice to Him, to abide in Christ, to walk in the light, to die to self, become possible to you; for you are conscious that in all these your will can act, and can take God's side; whereas, if it had been your emotions that must do it, you would, knowing them to be utterly uncontrollable, sink down in helpless despair.  

_Hannah Whitall Smith_

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**Our Bodies**

9. Scripture reminds us that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). What instructions (or examples) are given in Romans 12:1 and in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 concerning our bodies?

Why do you think it is important to honor and discipline our bodies?

_She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms._

_Proverbs 31:17_

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**Our Time**

10. There are numerous seminars and books to tell us how to manage our time. Usually, it's not more information that we need, just more discipline! Someone has said, “There is always enough time to do the will of God.” Would you agree with that statement? Why or why not?

11. What is the purpose of making the most of our time?

_Ephesians 5:15-17_

_Psalm 90:12_

One of Satan's most useful tools is getting us to waste time or to procrastinate. C.S. Lewis’ Screwtape again writes Wormwood concerning his patient’s use of time: “All the healthy and outgoing activities which we want him to avoid can be inhibited and _nothing_ given in return, so that at last he may say, as one of my own patients said on his arrival down here, “I now see that I spent most of my life in doing _neither_ what I ought _nor_ what I liked.”

**AUTHOR'S REFLECTION** - Certainly excellence in our lives is molded by discipline. Jesus’ words are so true: “Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak” (Mark 14:38). So often my intentions are good, but I never follow through because I don't exercise my will over my feelings or my lazy body! Richard Foster said, “The disciplined person is the person who can do what needs to be done when it needs to be done.”
Two cautions concerning discipline: First *discipline is not rigid*. It does not mean that my schedule can never be interrupted. Foster writes: “The disciplined person is a flexible person. . . . The disciplined person is always free to respond to every movement of divine Grace.” When I am disciplined I am usually caught up with my responsibilities and can handle a change of plans and interruptions. It is when I’m behind and undisciplined that I find it hard to be flexible. The second caution is, *discipline should never become legalistic*. Swindoll has defined legalism as “conformity to a standard for the purpose of exalting self.” The purpose of our discipline should be to order our lives in such a way that we are available to be used by God.

12. After studying the different facets of our lives that often need self-control, which area of your life do you feel needs more discipline? Why?

What could you begin to do now to develop self-control in that area?

A man may be consecrated, dedicated, and devoted, but of little value if undisciplined.

*Hudson Taylor*

13. Perhaps you would like to make a short-term goal for each area we have studied. Use this chart if you find it helpful.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>(Possible goals)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mind</td>
<td></td>
<td>Consistent Scripture memory</td>
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<td>Reading plan for the Bible or</td>
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<td>Other Christian books</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will</td>
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<td>Something you need to say “No” or “Yes” to</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Decide to cooperate with God in choosing</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>to do what is right.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotions</td>
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<td>Keep a journal expressing your</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings to God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td></td>
<td>Consistent exercise</td>
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<td>Balanced diet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>Make a priority list each day and</td>
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<td>At least try to get the most</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>important item accomplished!</td>
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</tbody>
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**SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE MEMORY:** Proverbs 23:12

I think this meditation by Joseph Bayly expresses my feelings toward discipline. I don’t want to have regrets at the end of the day because I have been totally undisciplined. I want my focus to be on the Lord and pleasing Him.

Lord Christ
Your Servant
Martin Luther
Said he only had
Two days
On his calendar:
today
and “that day.”
And that’s
what I want too.
And I want
to live
today
for
\textit{that day}. 