

Men, we will never get anywhere in life without discipline, and doubly so in spiritual matters. None of us is inherently righteous, so Paul's instructions regarding spiritual discipline in 1 Timothy 4:7-8 take on personal urgency: "Train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."

That word "train" comes from the Greek word from which we derive gymnasium. So, I invite you into God's Gym—to some pain and great gain!

### **Discipline of Purity**

Sensuality is the biggest obstacle to godliness among Christian men. The fall of King David should not only instruct us but scare the sensuality right out of us! Fill yourself with God's Word—memorize passages like 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, Job 31:1, Proverbs 6:27, Ephesians 5:3-7, and 2 Timothy 2:22. Find someone who will help you keep your soul faithful to God.

A pure mind is impossible if you mindlessly watch TV and movies or visit pornographic web sites (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7). Develop the divine awareness that sustained Joseph: "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

### **Discipline of Relationships**

To be all God wants you to be, put some holy sweat into your relationships! If you're married, you need to live out Ephesians 5:25-31: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (v. 25). For those who are fathers, God provides a workout in one pungent sentence: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

Relationships are not optional (Hebrews 10:25); they enable us to develop into what God wants us to be and most effectively learn and live God's truth.

### **Discipline of Mind**

The potential of possessing the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16) introduces the scandal of today's church—Christians who do not think Christianly, leaving our minds undisciplined. The Apostle Paul understood this well: "...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Philippians 4:8). Each ingredient is a matter of personal choice.

You can never have a Christian mind without reading the Scriptures regularly because you cannot be influenced by that which you do not know.

### **Discipline of Devotion**

Reading God's Word is essential, but meditation internalizes the Word and responds, "I desire to do your will, O my God" (Psalm 40:8). Beyond instructions like Ephesians 6:18-20, there are two great reasons to pray. The more we expose our lives to the white-hot sun of Christ's righteous life, the more his image will be burned into our character. The second reason is that prayer bends our wills to God's will.

Many men never have an effective devotional life because they never plan for it; they never expose their lives to his pure light.

### **Discipline of Integrity**

We can hardly overstate the importance of integrity to a generation of believers so much like the world in ethical conduct. But integrity's benefits—character, a clear conscience, deep intimacy with God—argue its importance.

We must let God's Word draw our lines of conduct. Our speech and actions must be intentionally true (Proverbs 12:22; Ephesians 4:15), backed by the courage to keep our word and stand up for our convictions (Psalm 15:4). An old saying sums it up: "Sow an act, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny."

## Discipline of Tongue

“If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless” (James 1:26). The true test of a man’s spirituality is not his ability to speak, but rather his ability to bridle his tongue! Offered to God on the altar, the tongue has awesome power for good. There must be an ongoing prayerfulness and resolve to discipline ourselves: “Who keeps the tongue doth keep his soul.”

## Discipline of Work

We meet God, the Creator, as a worker in Genesis 1:1–2:2. Since “God created man in his own image” (1:27), the way we work will reveal how much we allow the image of God to develop in us.

There is no secular/sacred distinction; all honest work ought to be done to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). We must recover the biblical truth that our vocation is a divine calling and thus be liberated to do it for the glory of God.

## Discipline of Perseverance

Hebrews 12:1-3 presents a picture of perseverance in four commands.

Divest! “Lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely” (v. 1a). That includes besetting sin, and anything else that hinders.

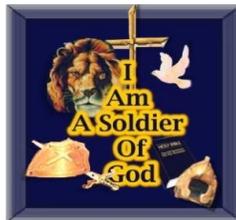
Run! “...with endurance the race that is set before us” (v. 1b). Each of us can finish our race (see also 2 Timothy 4:7).

Focus! “Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith” (v. 2). There never was a millisecond that he did not trust the Father. Consider! Our life is to be spent considering how Jesus lived (v. 3).

## Discipline of Church

You don’t have to go to church to be a Christian; you don’t have to go home to be married. But in both cases if you do not, you will have a very poor relationship!

You will never attain your full spiritual manhood, nor will your family reach its spiritual maturity without commitment to the church. Find a good church, join it, and commit yourself to it wholeheartedly. Your participation should include financial support, but it should also include giving your time, talents, expertise, and creativity to the glory of God.



## Discipline of Giving

How can we escape the power of materialism? By giving from a heart overflowing with God’s grace, like the believers in Macedonia who “gave themselves first to the Lord” (2 Corinthians 8:5): this is where grace giving must begin.

Giving disarms the power of money. Though giving should be regular, it should also be spontaneous and responsive to needs. And it should be joyous—“God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). And Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

As we sweat out the disciplines of a godly man, remember, with Paul, what energizes us to live them out—“not I, but the grace of God that is with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

