

Spiritual Discipline

Matthew 5:6 – “Blessed [are] they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

Shocking Statistics:

71% of women and 55% of men surveyed believed religion can answer today's problems

A typical church service has 59% females versus 41% males

Are women more spiritual by nature? If so, why? If not, why do we see these statistics?

- No, there are several (in fact more) examples of spiritual men in Scripture
- We see these statistics because Satan is warring against men. He is hurting the leadership.

Examples of Discipline

Mike Singletary (watch a play 50-60 times), Ernest Hemingway (wrote 2 pages per day), Leonardo da Vinci (drew 1000 hands), Thomas Edison (1000 light bulb failures), Winston Churchill (practiced his speeches)

Scriptural Discipline

Talent or Discipline? When it comes to spirituality – Every Christian is on equal footing!

1 Timothy 4:7-9 – “But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself [rather] unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This [is] a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.”

Exercise – come from the Greek word, *gymnos* – to exercise, work out, train

What are we told to do and why?

- We are told to spiritually exercise because it is good for this life and the next

Hebrews 12:1-3 – “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset [us], and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

Based on this passage, what should characterize our race with God?

- We must sacrifice our sinful flesh (the weights) to run well
- We must race – exercise – work hard – this is discipline!
- We must be patient. This is going to be a long work

Does this passage indicate that spiritual discipline will be hard?

- Yes, the example of Christ given speaks of Him enduring the cross and the shame.

What blessings are promised to us for obedience?

- Getting closer to Christ
- Receiving a joy that is set before us – the prize

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 – “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” (NIV)

What additional wisdom does Paul give us about Spiritual Discipline?

- All Christians are in the race, but we only get somewhere if we train and compete in the right way. Paul knew that He had not only had to proclaim the gospel but also live the gospel.

Love vs. Legalism – Our motivation for Discipline

One of the greatest dangers of discipline is that we work out of a legalism and become Pharisees rather than working out of love. Look back at Hebrews 12:1-3. What should be our motivation for running the race?

- Our love for Jesus Christ should be all our motivation. If it is, it will be pleasing to Him and won't be legalistic.