

## Cultivating a Disciplined Life

Many types of working industry in our society require for discipline. Without discipline we cannot work with efficiency, and teamwork may have a lot of conflicts.

What is discipline? Most people regard discipline as an external restraint exerted by a community onto oneself, a charter for social life. But real discipline is actually love and respect towards a community originating from the heart. It is an intrinsic restraint exerted upon oneself because of love. Without self-discipline, external discipline can only be a shackle.

But the training of self-discipline often begins from external restrains, and then gradually internalized through comprehension of the deeper meaning of the restrains.

Paul says, "I discipline my body and keep it under control." (1 Cor 9:27) Here he points out that discipline is a spiritual warfare, a persistent fight between our life in Christ and sin in Old Adam, so as to bring our body to the submission of the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to the control of Christ over our life. Therefore discipline to us Christians is not merely something concerning human relationship at the social level, but also concerning our discipleship of Christ.

The Bible teaches us to submit to the Holy Spirit and not to indulge in passion of the flesh. We should do things that are appropriate and correct, instead of things we like. Paul says to Timothy, "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him." (2 Tim 2:3-4) If we are pleasing Christ, we cannot please ourselves. Believers are like athletes competing on the field, who should discipline their minds, to overcome sins and worries of worldly matters and to win in the battles of life.

Is there a conflict between discipline and freedom? Living according to the flesh is not true freedom, but is an indulgence in sin to the point of inextricably being bogged down. Freedom is the ability to do the right things, as Jesus says, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:36) Only Jesus can set us free from sin and give us true freedom. Discipline is helping us to resist the sins which are clinging us, so that we can keep our freedom in Christ and not to be bonded by sin.

Discipline is doing the right things, even though these may not be things we like to do. The love of Christ incites us to restrain ourselves, and this is not really hard. If you feel hard, it is a reflection that your love toward Christ has fainted.

Christian discipline involves at least three aspects:

1. Discipline ourselves to look up to Christ

Our life has to be linked up to Christ, otherwise we cannot bear fruit. Therefore we should

discipline ourselves in basic spiritual trainings.

2. Discipline ourselves to have good characters

Our good deeds should be manifested before others so as to glorify our Heavenly Father. Good deeds are not something forced out, but are fruit of the Holy Spirit. Those who live according to the flesh cannot living according to the Spirit. Thus we should restrain our sins, so that the fruit of the Holy Spirit can prosper.

3. Discipline ourselves to excel

We should love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind and with all our strength. Thus we should do our best to serve Him. This is faithfulness. But excellence is not according to the worldly standard, which emphasizes achievements. God looks into the heart, and our attitude is much more important than achievements.