

Self-Control #3, Self-Discipline

Let's review what we've covered (and hopefully learned) previously...

Self-Control is more than just controlling our *behavior*. It is controlling our *thoughts, emotions, passions/desires, and activities/behavior*. This is so because *self* is much more than just *actions*; it requires controlling our minds, hearts, soul/spirit, and body.

We also learned that Self-Control involves *self-denial* (from Matt.16:24ff). Such involves *all* that makes us the individual we are (perhaps better, *who we choose to be*). *Self-denial* thus means *denying* ourselves the *thoughts, emotions, desires, and behaviors* in which the world indulges itself. It means saying "No" to self regarding these things, and is therefore largely *defensive* in nature. All of which brings us to today's lesson on *self-discipline*.

If self-denial is the *defensive* side (and it is), then self-discipline is the **offensive** side of self-control.

Self-Discipline is exactly what it sounds like, wherein:

- Self is composed of *mind, heart, soul, and body*, cp. Luke 10:27. And so, what is *discipline*?
- Discipline is translated from the Greek term, *gumnazo (goom-nad-zo)*, which is literally to *train naked-* to exercise or *train* vigorously with every encumbrance to achieving the desired goal is removed, 1Tim.4:7-8.
 - There is a *negative* connotation to *discipline* as a *punishment*; cf. Heb.12:5-7. This is *corrective* discipline.
 - But there must also be *positive* discipline involved, cf. Heb.12:8-14. The *treatment suited to a disciple* is not just *reproof/correction*, cf. Rev.3:19. It also includes *guidance* and *instruction*, Eph.6:4; Col.2:5. In fact,
 - Discipline includes, in addition to the *punitive/correction* aspect, both *instruction* ("this way") and *encouragement* (motivation), Heb.12:1-2. Although *gumnazo* is not in these verses, note that Jesus is the "author" of our faith. The term here is *archegos*, and does not mean *to write* or *author*, but rather *one who goes first to lead* (and *show*) *others*; a *trailblazer* or *pioneer*; a *captain* who doesn't just *point/direct*, but *leads*.
 - Now apply these things to *self-discipline*: Are you **leading/directing** your thoughts, emotions, passions/desires, and actions? Or **being led** by them, cf. 2Pet.2:12-19? It's the difference between *driving the bus, riding along on the bus while someone (or something) else drives*, or even worse, *being run over and then dragged along behind the bus!* So, who is driving *the bus* of your life? You, with the *instruction* and *guidance* (discipline) of the Lord? Have you turned the wheel over to Satan and/or the world? Or, are you at the mercy of your own *thoughts, emotions, passions/desires, and body*?

Self-Discipline is the means by which you wrest control of your life from Satan/world, or even your own *thoughts, emotions, desires, and body*, and

guiding and directing it in the way you want to go- the path of Jesus that leads to heaven. Remember, *discipline* is *treatment suited to a disciple* (or follower)!

How do we accomplish the task of *self-discipline*? Go back to 1Tim.4:7-8...

1. **Start eating right, v.7a.** *Worldly fables and wisdom* is just “garbage in, garbage out.” There are no “quick fix diets” or “magic pills” that will allow you to continue to consume spiritual “junk food”! Instead, feed yourself with “*the pure milk of the word*” at first, 1Pet.2:2-3; then gradually move up to the “*solid food*” or “*meat*” as you grow and progress, Heb.5:12 – 6:2.
2. **Stop waiting for or depending on someone else to do it for/to you, v.7b.** It’s called “*self-discipline*” for a reason. Another (or others) can be a great source of *instruction* and *encouragement*, but no one else can do it for you. You have to actually “put the work in” yourself, 1Cor.9:26-27a.
3. **Remember the purpose or goal of godliness, v.7c.** This is not about some “personal weight-loss” or “personal “best” goal/achievement; this is about *godliness*- being like God/Christ, Eph.5:1-2; 1Pet.1:13-16.
4. **Prioritize it over mere bodily discipline, v.8a.** Think about the effort and expense we put into our *physical* health: *diet*, *exercise*, *vitamins* and, *wellness checks*, and *OTC meds* and *prescriptions* and *ERs* and even *surgery* when we’re sick or hurting. Now think about what we put into our *spiritual* health: a *couple of hours’ worth* of time at Bible Study and Worship? Make *spiritual discipline* a priority, Rom.8:12-13.
5. **Understand what’s at stake, v.8b.** Your “best life now” is NOT a “fulfilling career” and “perfect family” and “money to live/retire comfortably” and “dream vacations.” It IS “living a new life, obedient but free” in Christ, being the husband or wife God expects you to be (Eph.5:22-31), raising children in “*discipline and instruction of the Lord*” (Eph.6:4) being “*content*” with “*food and covering*” because “*godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment*” (1Tim.6:6-8), and *eternal rest* instead *eternal torment*, (Heb.4:1ff; cp. Matt.25:34 with v.41).

Conclusions:

- There is no doubt that self-control necessarily involves *self-denial* (being able to and saying “No” to self); that we “*lay aside*” or “*put off*” spiritually unhealthy and corrupt *thoughts, emotions, desires, and practices* of the “*old self*,” Eph.4:22.
- But self-control also certainly involves *self-discipline* (being able to *take control* and *steer* self in the *righteous* and *holy* way); that we “*put on*” spiritually healthy and godly *thoughts, emotions, desires, and practices* of the “*new self*,” Eph.4:24.
- So, are you willing to “*discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness*,” or just *along for the ride*? The former “*holds the promise for the present life and also for the life to come*,” 1Tim.4:8. But if the latter, you won’t like the destination!