



August 2010
Equipped to embrace discipline

Discipline isn't my favourite word. I doubt it's yours either. It conjures up the idea of unrelenting pressure to either do something we'd rather not do (like consistently rising early in the morning when we'd prefer to stay in bed) or stop doing something we'd rather do (like eating chocolates when we're supposed to be dieting)! However, discipline really means "training" and we won't get very far without it. No athlete reaches his full potential without consistent training and no student achieves academic success without training herself to be disciplined in study.

The Bible says that people "die for lack of discipline"¹. Wow! Sounds pretty dramatic! Now, don't switch off because you don't like the topic of this message... Instead, let's look together at some areas where an injection of discipline could make a huge positive difference to our lives.

How about starting with one of the examples I've just given? This business of getting into the habit of **rising early in the morning** is something that many of us struggle with. Yet, the Bible draws our attention to the danger of lying in late² and we have the example of Jesus who rose early to pray³. One of my favourite authors is Jill Briscoe and she has said, in the context of getting up early to start the day with God, that she would rather be sleep-deprived than God-deprived. Worth thinking about, huh?

Then there's the example of being disciplined with regard to **diet and exercise**.

Are we careful about putting the right kinds of food into our bodies or are we sloppy about what we eat? Do we take time to build sufficient exercise into our lives? It doesn't mean we necessarily take out an expensive subscription to the gym – walking briskly for 30 minutes a day, four or five times a week, works wonders and is a good discipline to put in place.

Do we **act on what we say** or is this an area that requires discipline? It's so easy to promise to do something and then, for one reason or another, fail to act on it. The New Testament book of James points out that we're guilty of sinning if we don't do what we know to be right⁴. Have you recently told someone you'd do something and haven't yet done it? Don't put it off any longer – just do it!

What about exercising discipline by **controlling what goes into our mind**? With so much information easily accessible via the internet, DVDs, books and magazines, it makes sense to be disciplined in this area. The GIGO effect (garbage in, garbage out) doesn't apply only to computers. If we allow rubbish into our mind, it will only be a matter of time before this pollutes our thinking and will eventually be worked out in our behaviour. With such a gloomy outcome, it makes sense to take steps to prevent such stuff getting in to our heads in the first place. Are we prepared to make conscious decisions about what we will, or will not, allow into our minds?

How disciplined are you in **spending time with God**? Do you often rush into your packed day, telling yourself you'll meet with him later, or when you're less busy? But, more often than not, you probably find this "later" or "less busy" time never comes... This is an area of my life that requires a great deal of discipline because, as a Bible teacher, it's very tempting to convince myself that spending time in God's word and talking to him as I prepare messages for other people is an acceptable substitute for my own personal time with him. This is a temptation I need to ruthlessly reject because, if I don't feed my own soul first, then I'm not going to be much good in feeding anyone else.

Hey guys, let's not "die for lack of discipline"!

¹ Proverbs 5:23 (NIV)

² Proverbs 6:10

³ Mark 1:35

⁴ James 4:17