

Self-Discipline

Detailed Outline

Part 1 of 3

Introduction

A. Did you know that one of the qualifications for an elder is “discipline” or “self-control”?

*“[An elder must be] . . . hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.”
(Titus 1:8 ESV)*

B. To protect yourself from sin and temptations and to be effective in your work and stewardship, you need self-discipline.

C. Martyn Lloyd-Jones points out that one of the chief characteristics of all the great men and women of God of the past is self-discipline:

*“I defy you to read the life of any saint that has ever adorned the life of the Church without seeing at once that the greatest characteristic in the life of that saint was discipline and order. Invariably it is the universal characteristic of all the outstanding men and women of God . . . Obviously it is something that is thoroughly scriptural and absolutely essential.”
– Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, p. 210*

I. What the Bible Says about Self-Discipline

A. A self-disciplined person is a strong and mighty person!

“Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” (Prov. 16:32)

1. The point is: “the proverb considers self-control the highest kind of human power.”
2. The disciplined person is like a mighty person of war. He or she has won the great battle over one self. The ability to rule an unruly spirit and conquer self is like being a mighty warrior.
3. Notice he specifically says the passion of anger has to be brought under self-control.
4. William Barclay well illustrates the tragic results of the undisciplined life by telling the sad story of the wasted life of the multitalented poet, critic, and theologian Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834):

Coleridge is the supreme tragedy of indiscipline. Never did so great a mind produce so little. He left Cambridge University to join the army; he left the army because he could not rub down a horse; he returned to Oxford and left without a degree. He began a paper called “The Watchman” which lived for ten numbers and then died. It has been said of him that, “he lost himself in visions of work to be done that always remained to be done. Coleridge had every poetic gift but one—the gift of sustained and concentrated effort.”

In his head and in his mind he had all kinds of books, as he said himself, “completed save for transcription.” But the books were never composed outside Coleridge’s mind, because he would not face the discipline of sitting down to write them out. No one ever reached any eminence, and no one having reached it ever maintained it without discipline.

B. The man without self-control is easy prey to every vice and temptation.

1. An undisciplined person has no protection from the enemy.

“A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.” (Prov. 25:28)

2. In the ancient world, walls were placed around a city to defend it from outside forces. A city without walls is defenseless—open to all kinds of villainy. It has no protective wall, from the many enemies without!

C. The spiritually fruitful man is a self-controlled man.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . . self-control.” (Gal. 5:22–23)

1. The Greek word for self-control is *enkrateia*, a word made up of two words:
 - a) *Ego* “I” and *kratos* “strength”
 - b) So the word conveys the idea of self-control, self-restraint, self-mastery.
2. In the *Expositor Dictionary of Bible Words*, Larry Richards defines the Greek word, *enkrateia* as, “to have power over oneself and thus to be able to hold oneself in” (p. 546).
3. *Time Magazine* did an article on “Why Intelligent People Fail.” It looked at highly educated people from Harvard and Yale and compared them to people with little education but who had succeeded greatly in life. They found the secret to a person’s success was two things:
 - a) They were skilled in interpersonal relationships, and
 - b) They were all self-disciplined.
4. The Holy Spirit wants to produce this in you! He will work this in you.

D. The leader of God’s people must be self-controlled.

“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (2 Tim. 1:7)

1. The Spirit here is the Holy Spirit.
2. Timothy must guard against cowardice and timidity in the face of persecution and danger. But the Spirit is present and he gives power and self-control.
3. Power, love, and self-control are three positive qualities characterizing the presence of the Holy Spirit.
4. *Self-control “[Self-control] depicts the control over one actions and thoughts that prevent rash behavior and aids a balance assessment of situations.” – Philip Towners*
5. A secular magazine article made this comment: “Among the young, especially, self-discipline has been valued far less than self-expression, or self-fulfillment.”

E. A self-controlled leader resists worldliness.

“For the grace of God has appeared . . . training us . . . to live self-controlled . . . lives in the present age.” (Titus 2:11–12)

1. This is in contrast to worldliness.
 - a) Worldliness is self-indulgence, self-fulfillment.
 - b) But the Spirit of God, the word of God trains us in self-control.
 - c) Jesus Christ and Paul were disciplined men, and God wants to develop that in you.
 - d) Leaders need to be role models of self-control.
2. I remember going into a pastor’s home once, and I immediately saw total disorder. Every room was a disaster. I sat down with the pastor, and the first thing he said to me was, “We’re having some problems in the church.” Of course they were having problems in the church – he was having problems in his own home! The complete disorder at home brought disorder right into the church.

F. The self-disciplined man controls the daily appetites of his life.

“Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we are imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified.” (1 Cor. 9:25–27, emphasis added)

1. Paul was a man who disciplined his body.
2. We have to guard against laziness, lust, greed, self-indulgence, sleep, eating.
3. We need this wonderful virtue.

G. Long-lasting spiritual growth requires self-discipline

“Train [discipline] yourself for godliness.” (1 Tim. 4:7b)

1. Think of yourself as a spiritual athlete.
 - a) You need a program of training.
 - b) Training for a sport always involves personal commitment, concentration, self-discipline, hard work, pain, sacrifice, and a program for training.
 - c) Without these elements, there is no training.
2. The simple fact is, there is no deep, long-lasting spiritual growth without a disciplined life of prayer, reading and studying of the Bible, and responsible Christian service.
3. Our personal character is shaped and defined by our power of self-control or our lack of self-control.
4. You cannot develop strength of character or godly life without self-discipline. Many of our personal problems and failures are due directly to a lack of personal self-discipline.

“Perverted values, wasted time, dulled thinking, flabby bodies, and distorted emotions provide ample evidence of our undisciplined lives.” – D. G. Kehl, Christianity Today, Oct. 7, 1983, p. 33

“⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control . . . ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:5–6a, 8)

“[Older women] are to teach what is good, and so train the young women . . . to be self-controlled.” (Titus 2:3–5)

“Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.” (Titus 2:6)

“For the overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach . . . hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.” (Titus 1:7–8)

In the following section, we will look practically at how to develop discipline into our ministry and our personal life