

Discipline - The Foundation of Life

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Discipline, very simply, is the foundation of life. It is the one rule you cannot break. At least you cannot break it and get away with it. What is discipline?

Discipline is discipleship. We, as humans, must be disciplined. We must become disciples. If we do not become disciples we become egotists or worse. Disciples are followers. Disciples become leaders because, only those who know how to follow can really lead.

An unfortunate but recurring problem in modern (and postmodern) society is the lack of discipline. In strong-willed people this becomes a serious situation. If one is not a disciple, one's will remains unbroken. If the will is not broken, the spirit is injured. The spirit can only be healthy if the will is broken.

We are to become disciples of our parents first of all. They are to break our will. In particular, the father is to break our will. Breaking the will frees the spirit. It is the spirit that responds to God. Without that combination (broken will and unbroken spirit) we become uncontrollable.

Too many times in the past, a father would break the will of the child and also broke his spirit. This wrong, and destructive practice has produced a reaction. Today, many times, fathers are passively allowing any kind of behavior in young children. This is not discipline and does not teach the child discipleship. These children are growing up as uncontrollable. They believe that they have a right to do and say whatever they want.

This destructive behavior seems to be uncorrectable. The person has been formed into a will that cannot be challenged without incurring wrath. Any attempt to correct that child is met with defiance. The defiance is deeper than just the will. It reaches to the spirit. The spirit is offended because it has learned that its way is right. It is the final arbiter of truth.

Children who have been neglected develop this behavior. They know that there is no one who cares enough to intervene in their life. They have been abandoned. They are lost to the world. This world is a dangerous place – a place where one looks out for one's self or die. Survival becomes the goal - survival by any means necessary.

Sometimes the energies are turned inward - sometimes outward. Inward causes depression. Outward causes destruction.

As the child becomes a young adult the situation becomes impossible. They become physically strong and psychologically devious

Discipline is loving direction. It includes, but is not limited to, punishment. Punishment is only a small part of discipline. Discipline values the person and attempts to develop the best characteristics of the person. Discipline sees the latent talent and works to encourage the abilities. It attempts to hone the skills into useful behaviors. It gently (and sometimes not so gently) shapes the will. The spirit then responds with the satisfaction of a job well done. The undisciplined person never has that exhilarating experience. The experience of accomplishment is reward enough for the disciplined person. There are no demands of the persons of lesser accomplishment. Life becomes example – example of life well-lived and loved. Appreciation for excellence is high.

When a person is disciplined he/she develops appreciation for those who do their work well. Undisciplined persons have appreciation for no one. They are self-consumed. Their existence is so fragile that they can never be wrong. They can never allow themselves to be corrected. That would be to admit wrong and they cannot do that. They have to be right at all costs. When their will is challenged, their spirit is attacked. When their spirit is attacked, they fight like a cornered and wounded animal. That behavior is becoming prevalent even among “christian” people. It is the result of a lack of parenting.

Only submission to God and His Word can change those people. When they are confronted they are truly repentant. They hate their behavior. They can pray and promise to do better only to have the behaviors surface the next day. Any challenge brings renewed fear. Fear strikes the heart and, in spite of the best intentions, the battle is on again.

How are these people different from egotists? Egotists only repent as far as they need to survive. They never truly repent. Egotists love themselves. These people hate themselves but have no power to change. Egotists are controlled by insecurity. These people are controlled by fear. They know they are destructive but are not able to control their actions. Another power is controlling them. Their self-loathing is the result of a lack of discipline.

Discipline is motivated by love – a love these people have never experienced. Jesus said, Love your neighbor as yourself. Real self-love is the result of discipline. It is not so much self-love as it is self-respect – respect that begins with accepting self as a creation of a loving God – respect that reaches out to all persons.

The Apostle Paul kept his body in subjection. He did not allow his physical body to control his mind and heart. He was, in a word, disciplined. He had been a student of Gamaliel. Gamaliel was a demanding teacher. Paul learned that accomplishment was the result of diligent application. He was a student of the Covenant. He was a Ph.D - a doctor of the law. As a Christian, he applied those same disciplines to the New Covenant. The world is still reaping the rewards of that discipline. God used him to spread the gospel to the entire Mediterranean world.

The Bible predicts lawlessness in the last days. We are there. We can still, in these last days, be lawful. We can display the law of God in our hearts and in our actions. God has laws. Gravity is one example. He also has Spiritual laws. They cannot be broken without dire consequences. World society is experiencing those consequences today. True believers are called on to display the love and discipline of a loving Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Are you a disciplined person? If you are not, God will provide that discipline. If you fall on that Stone (Jesus), you will be broken. If you do not fall on that Stone, that Stone will someday fall on you. Today is the day of salvation. Now is the accepted time. If you have not experienced loving discipline, it is waiting for you. In the Words of the Word and in the words of God's children, you can find love and discipline that will break your will and bless your spirit and you will be healed. That is God's promise to you today.

Broken hearts can be mended. God is the Great Healer. He uses us to bring healing to each other. That is the call to us today. Mend the broken hearts.