

Sometimes I just stand in awe of God's perfect timing.

Think about what is happening in our culture and how it is affecting all of us. People who have been living an undisciplined life are now learning how to be disciplined. I just returned from Walmart and as I was walking down an aisle, I unknowingly found myself within 6' of a fellow shopper, she jumped back as though I had done something awful. Yes, like it or not we are learning how to be disciplined. This word that had fallen into such disregard is now the word of the day. Cough into the bend of your elbow, stay 6' away, stay home, work from home, stop working, no groups of more than 10 etc. As I have been preaching on for weeks, discipline is a good thing! 1 Timothy 4:7 "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness".

We are as Christians required to divest ourselves of every association, habit and tendency which impedes godliness. Then, we are to reinvest all our energy and sweat in the pursuit of godliness. Our culture is telling us to divest ourselves of anything that might expose us to the virus and reinvest all our energy and sweat in the pursuit of germ-free living. Clearly, God did not send this virus to harm us, (God doesn't do that, He loves us) but it seems to me that He is using it to teach us discipline.

Understanding the discipline of purity, marriage, fatherhood, friendship, the mind, devotion, prayer, worship, integrity, the tongue, work, the church, leadership, giving witness and ministry is foundational to Christian living.

The legendary success of Mike Singletary, two-time NFL Defensive Player of the Year, is testimony to his remarkably disciplined life. Ernest Hemingway's massive literary discipline transformed the way people throughout the English-speaking world use language. Michelangelo's, da Vinci's, and Tintoretto's billion sketches, the quantitative discipline of their work, prepared the way to the enduring quality of those works. Winston Churchill, speaker of the century, was anything but a natural, unless by "natural" we mean a naturally disciplined man who overcame his remarkable impediments through much hard work and extra effort. Ignace Jan Paderewski, the brilliant pianist, said it all when he remarked to an over ardent admirer, "Madam, before I was a genius, I was a drudge."

It's a fact that we will never get anywhere in life without discipline – especially in spiritual matters. There are some who are born with natural gifts, like in music, sports, math, English and art. However, none of us can claim an innate spiritual advantage. None of us are inherently righteous, none of us naturally seek God, and none of us are innately good. Therefore, as children of grace, our spiritual discipline is everything.

No discipline, no discipleship!

No Sweat, no sainthood!

No perspiration, no inspiration!

No pain, no gain!

If we at DCC would spend our time developing our spiritual discipline the effect personally and corporately would have a life changing effect in our life's, our families, our church and community. It amazes me how often people think that they can live an undisciplined life and still be successful. Success is possible it just takes discipline, but it is hard work. To avoid this virus is hard but you can do it. In-fact you must do it, for some it's a matter of life or death. Spiritual discipline too for some is a matter of spiritual life or death.

You just can't pull the covers over our heads – “There is so much to do...a world in crisis. People who have never heard about Jesus.

To retreat is not the answer, but to impose your self-sufficient legalism is not either. To require and not inspire is to reinvolve the law of Moses. Jesus came to fulfill the law and introduce His grace. If someone can practice all the disciplines, we have studied over the last few months and not demonstrate grace. I wasted my time. Being in Christ is a relationship and like all relationships it deserves disciplined maintenance, but never legalism (forced compliance).

There is a world of difference between legalism and discipline. Legalism says, “I will do this thing to gain merit with God,” while discipline says, “I will do this because I love God and want to please Him”. Legalism is man-centered; discipline is God-centered. Paul, said, “discipline yourself to be godly”!

If I were sitting across the table from you, you might ask, "How can I go about it? Tell me how to discipline myself for godliness without being legalistic."

First, I would tell you to review the sixteen disciplines and divide them into two lists: the ones you are doing well and the ones you are not. You might even ask your spouse or a trusted friend their opinion as to an accuracy.

Then number your areas of need in order of importance, say: 1) Purity, 2) Mind, 3) Prayer, 4) Witness, 5) Giving, 6) Word, 7) Friendship, and 8) Leadership. Then pick one that you need to work on and start there. It is important not to take all of them on at once, for that would most likely lead to failure. It would be better to succeed in a few disciplines than to assure failure by overcommitment.

Be realistic! Make sure that you commit to changes that are possible. Success begets success.

Before setting your commitments in concrete, give yourself a week to think about them and pray over them. Seek the Holy Spirit's guidance for ways to implement the discipline.

Ask your spouse or dear friend to hold you accountable and pray for you. Be honest and willing to take advice as you grow in your likeness of Christ.

You will stumble and fail but that is how you grow, admit your failures and go at it again. Remember we are not under the law but grace. You are simply trying to live a disciplined life which is pleasing to your Heavenly Father.