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**PERSEVERING IN DISCIPLINE . . .**

**“FOR THE PURPOSE OF GODLINESS”**

**Selected Texts**

“We must discipline our lives, but we must do so all the year round, and not merely at stated periods. I must discipline myself at all times.” This resolution of Martyn Lloyd-Jones accurately reflects the present, continuous tense of the command of 1 Timothy 4:7—“discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.” Because the pursuit of Godliness is neither seasonal nor temporary, neither is the practice of the Spiritual Disciplines which lead to Godliness. Dabbling in the Disciplines doesn’t develop Christlikeness. As there is no progress in an athletic or musical skill without persistent practice, so there is little growth in the grace and skill of living like Christ without perseverance in the Spiritual Disciplines.

# THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Where the Holy Spirit dwells, His presence creates a hunger for holiness and gives the believer a desire to be like Christ. The natural man has no such passion. But in the Christian, the Spirit of God begins to carry out the will of God to make the child of God like the Son of God (Rom. 8:29). And He who began this work in the Christian “will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6). So it is the role of the Spirit to produce within us the desire and power for the Disciplines which lead to Godliness. That He develops this in every believer is evident from 2 Tim. 1:7: “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.” So even if your natural temperament isn’t inclined toward orderly, disciplined habits, the Spirit’s presence within you equips you with a supernatural “spirit of . . . discipline” for you to obey the command to “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”

1. **THE ROLE OF FELLOWSHIP**

Practicing the Spiritual Disciplines in isolation from other believers cannot make us as Godly as Christians who are active in a local body of Christ. To measure progress in Christlikeness only in terms of growth in fellowship with God is an incomplete measurement. Spiritual maturity also includes growth in fellowship with the God’s family (see 1 John 1:3.) We don’t think of fellowship when we think of the Spiritual Disciplines because we often fail to distinguish socializing (which is good and important) from fellowship. Socializing involves the sharing of human and earthly life; Christian fellowship involves the sharing of spiritual life. But we go beyond giving socializing the place it deserves, often accepting it as a *substitute* for fellowship. Thus our practice of the Disciplines suffers and our growth in grace is stunted.

1. **THE ROLE OF STRUGGLE**

There is an element of struggle in Christian living. Many forces combat the spiritual progress of those still on this side of Heaven. Now, the way of Christ is not always an inner struggle, every moment a battle, but neither is it without lifelong opposition. Therefore, don’t be misled into thinking that if you drink of the grace God offers through the Spiritual Disciplines then living the Christian life will be easy. Referring to the Godliness mentioned in 1 Tim. 4:7-8, Paul writes in verse 10, “For it is for this we labor and strive.” The Bible also warns us of the opposition we will face from the world, the flesh, and the Devil. But Christ has won victory over these enemies. The Holy Spirit mediates this victory to us as we take up the struggle of our cross and follow Jesus, living as He did in the Disciplines.

***MORE APPLICATION***

1. ***Would you be Godly? Then practice the Spiritual Disciplines in light of eternity.***
2. ***Would you be Godly? There’s no other way but through the Spiritual Disciplines.***

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