

THE BATTLE IN THE MIND

Besides developing spiritual disciplines in your life, you will need to establish disciplines to block or re-direct your thinking when temptations from Satan or old patterns of thought arise in your mind. You may want to list your most tempting negative thoughts, examine them in the light of God's thinking, and then consider ways to overcome them.

THE DISCIPLINE OF YOUR BEHAVIOR

Behavior is also a result of your thinking. That is why the "spiritual disciplines" already discussed will have a great affect on how you live your life. However, new patterns of behavior must be formed so as to break existing negative behaviors and bring about change. Let us examine a few areas in which you must establish new patterns of discipline to change your behavior.

First, the places where you frequent or "hang out." Some of the places you go have a negative affect on your behavior. In order to bring positive change to your Christian life, you will have to discipline yourself to stop going to those places and start going to places that will encourage godly behavior.

Second, the entertainment you seek. There may be entertainment in your life: that distracts you from God and His plan for your life; that appeals to your fleshly desires and plunges you into sin and guilt; and that sits up attitudes and behaviors that hinder your relationship with others. You will need to examine your behavior as it is affected by entertainment and decide which specific entertainment must be stopped or limited. You will need to discipline yourself to re-direct your energies and interests to more spiritually positive areas.

Third, how you do things. Behavior patterns at work, home, school, or recreation can have a negative affect on you or those around you. How you do things may be patterned after poor training in your childhood, deceptive religious practices, fear of rejection or abuse, economic conditions, sinful addictions, past failures, or any number of things which caused bad habits to occur in your behavior. Based upon the truth of God's word and the principles He has given you, you can establish disciplines or patterns of behavior that determine how you will do things as a child of God. Discipline yourself by finding patterns for godly behavior and commit yourself to follow them.

Fourth, how you talk and what you say. Your speech is part of your behavior. How you talk and what you say can be destructive to your own Christian life and to others. (James 3:6-10) Your words form pictures and ideas in your own mind and in the minds of others. When you speak these negative, destructive pictures and ideas, you provide Satan with am-

munition to bring low self-worth, rejection, fear, doubt, hatred, and pain into your life and into the lives around you. You must examine your speech and discipline yourself to stop negative patterns of speech. Make it a habit of speaking "blessings" and not curses on yourself and others.

Fifth, who your friends are. "Bad company corrupts good morals." If you are spending a lot of time with those who do not know the Lord and who are attempting to pull you away from the Lord, then you will have to develop new friendships that will promote godly values in your life. You will need to establish patterns for your social life that take you away from the negative influence of non-Christian friends and direct you to new friendships that provide spiritual encouragement and fulfillment.

CAUTION!!!

Discipline is not an end in itself. Discipline is only the vehicle by which you make yourself available to God and His plan for your life. It is only a tool which enables you to successfully follow Jesus Christ. Don't make it your goal, as did the Pharisees in Jesus' day, and allow it to become a legalistic trap and a deceptive measure for spirituality.

ARE YOU IN A RUT?

Does your Christian life need change? Are you stuck in a rut? Have you been crying out to God in prayer to bring the needed changes in your life and nothing seems to be changing? God is calling you to follow Him by "...disciplining yourself for the purpose of godliness."

GET INTO THE GROOVE!

The groove of discipline will provide you with spiritual habits that will re-structure your thinking and your behavior. Like the bobbed run, the groove of discipline will provide a consistent, effective path on which to move in God's direction and bring about change.

KNOW THE TRUTH



"...AND THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE!"

GET OUT OF THE "RUT" AND INTO THE "GROOVE"!

Make Changes In Your Life Through Discipline

*"...discipline yourself for
the purpose of godliness."
(1 Timothy 4:7b)*

Pastor Lynn Kern

CHANGE

The Apostle Paul said, *"Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."* (1 Corinthians 5:17). The Christian life is a life of new beginnings, transformation, and change. We are forgiven of our past and set-apart as a new person in Christ. A spiritual work of God's Holy Spirit has begun in our hearts and minds and we begin to act differently. However, change is not easy, nor automatic in every area of our Christian life. Some of the "old things" seemed to drop off immediately, while others seem to take more time and effort to get free of. The Apostle Paul knew it would take a change in our habits of thinking and acting to bring about change in our life. That is why he said to *"...discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness,"* (1 Timothy 4:76). Get out of the "rut" and into the "groove."

WHAT IS A "RUT"?

Change in the Christian life will involve getting out of "ruts" that were a part of your life as a result of your past sin, hurts, and wrong choices. A "rut" can be defined as a hole in the ground which prevents you from making progress in the direction you want to go or from making any progress at all. To make a spiritual analogy, ruts are simply bad habits in your thinking or behavior caused by worldly ideas and philosophy, addictions, flaws in your character, and past experiences. You may want change to take place, but most often these ruts keep you from making it.

RUTS BECOME SPIRITUAL SLAVERY

Usually, ruts lead to deeper holes and create greater problems. We can all picture ourselves being stuck in a rut with our car and making the problem worse by attempting to spin our tires to get out. That is what many Christians do in their attempt to bring needed changes in their Christian life. They are going nowhere fast, attempting to use the same methods and ideas they had learned from their past. Someone wrote this definition of insanity: "Doing the same thing in the same way over a long period of time and expecting a different result." The hole gets bigger and deeper as you feel the guilt of constant failure and experience the rut enslaving you. How do we get free from these destructive habits in our thinking and behavior so that we can change?

GOD'S WAY INVOLVES YOUR COOPERATION

God has provided everything we need to experience change and live a successful Christian life. However, He wants your cooperation in the matter. The Apostle Paul declared this truth in balance when he stated, *"...work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you,*

both to will and to work for His good pleasure," (Philippians 2:12b-13). God has purposed to make changes in your life

in order that you might be like His Son, Jesus Christ, and will work with you through His power to make those changes. However, there is a part you must play in bringing about the changes God has planned for you. Christians repeatedly tell God through song, prayer, and re-dedication services that they want God to change their life. They somehow assume that God will come and flip a switch in their being and make it all happen without their involvement. Not so! You must cooperate with God's principles and methods for change. Like getting the car out of the rut, we will have to stop spinning our wheels as we have done in the past and try another way - God's way.

THE "GROOVE" OF DISCIPLINE

In order to change, new patterns of thinking and behavior must be developed. Just as ruts have been formed in our lives through years of negative patterns, so new God-given patterns are needed to lead us out of those ruts and into freedom and change. I like to describe these patterns of thinking and behavior as "grooves." A groove is a designed track or channel which provides a structure that will help you stay on course and move effectively toward your goal and bring about change. This groove that we are talking about is "discipline." Building disciplines in your life is like laying tracks for a train or building a bank for a bobbed run. You are building a structure that will guide you away from the negative patterns in your life and toward the God-given patterns that lead to change. This is what the Apostle Paul told Christians to do, *"...discipline yourselves"* - make new patterns of thinking and behavior in your life based upon God's way.

THE DISCIPLINE OF A DISCIPLE

A true follower of Jesus Christ is called a disciple. Discipline is a root word of discipline. Thus, an aspect of following Jesus Christ as a disciple will involve discipline. These words depict a person who has not only received the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, but who is committed to following God in a way that makes sacrifices, establishes new priorities, and develops a life-style conforming to God's purposes. The disciples of Jesus did that and those Jesus called to follow Him were asked to do that. It must be true of us today if we will be His disciple.

THE DISCIPLINE OF YOUR MIND

When you became a Christian, God didn't push the "clear" button in the computer of your mind and erase all your past memories and worldly ideas. Part of God's salvation is an ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in your life to change your thinking from the worldly ideas dominated by Satan and his kingdom, to the spiritual ideas of God and His kingdom. Also, He wants to replace the hurts, failures, and guilt of our past with His love, forgiveness, and hope through the truth of His word. The Apostle Paul states, *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good, and acceptable, and perfect,"* (Romans 12:2). God wants to change your thinking so that you will develop His ideas and values, as well as see things as He sees them.

THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Much of the change in your thinking will be based upon your knowledge of God and understanding His plan for your life. The "spiritual disciplines" provide patterns or grooves by which you can develop your relationship with God and have a renewed mind. The following are the main spiritual disciplines that will help you reach your goal.

First, reading and studying the word of God as contained in the Bible will be your main source of spiritual truth in knowing God and understanding His plan for your life. (1 Timothy 3:16, 17) God will speak to you through His word. You must make this a habit in your Christian life.

Second, prayer is your communication with God. Learning to pray is something we do, not what we study. It is in prayer that you will learn to hear the voice of God, feel His presence, and know His heart for others.

Third, meditation is taking the time to think and process what we learn from God through His word and through prayer. Set aside time to be quiet and think about what God has said so that you can apply it to your life.

Fourth, worship God both publicly with your church family and privately as you have your devotional time with Him. Disciplining yourself to declare personal praise and worship will get your eyes on God and His purposes, as well as provide opportunity to enter into His presence in a special way.

Fifth, fellowship is a discipline that brings you into contact with God's people on a regular basis and offers you a spiritual family in which to belong. Your brothers and sisters in the Lord will offer encouragement, love, ministry, and balance to your Christian life that is needed for your spiritual growth and well-being.