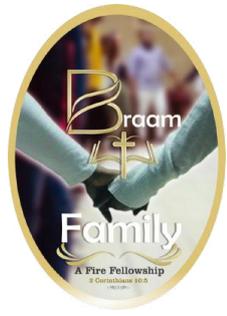


HOW TO GROW IN DISCIPLINE?



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There are certain qualities that success requires, and so does being a stable Christian. A key element to achieve this [stability] is DISCIPLINE. Discipline in this case is a control implemented by enforcing. Discipline sets boundaries that one cannot cross because of their desire to achieve something. When looking at discipline, it can be perceived in two different ways. The one way would be looking at it as punishment, and the other would be a pattern of habits that one forcefully adapts to in order to achieve something. Sometimes it's both, where the discipline feels like punishment but it's to achieve something.

Discipline usually goes against our feelings and that's what makes it hard. And as humans, we are more inclined to comfort, and anything contrary to that will be seen as a threat. With that said, there are three common areas where many struggle with discipline. These areas are MORALITY whereby there is no abstinence, HEALTH concerning eating healthy and watching what you eat, and ECONOMICS which is poor management of funds. Being disciplined in these areas is very beneficial for an individual.

In everything we engage ourselves in, there is an image that we have as an end goal, and most of the times we don't reach that goal because of a lack of discipline. However, this shouldn't be the case for Christians. To be disciplined, one needs to first master their emotions and feelings. The truth of the matter is, most of the times the excuses that we give to avoid discipline are a result of emotions and feelings. But remember one who lacks control over their emotions will always find excuses to avoid discipline.

There are many reasons as to why many people live an undisciplined life, and the lack of motivation is one of them. If you are overweight and the doctors tell you, you have 3 weeks to live if you don't lose weight, this realization would be enough to cause you to change your habits. What do you do when your spiritual life is not kept healthy? We need to understand the urgency and become disciplined in this generation. The lack of direction and vision can also be a reason that strays one from discipline. If you don't know or see where you are going, you will not see the need to be disciplined. However, wrong motives can also be a catalyst for discipline, don't let that be your case.



In our Christian journey, one of the main reasons as to why it is difficult to pray or meditate is because there's a lack of self-discipline. Which in turn hinders our growth and conformity to Christ. The world we live in makes it harder and harder for one to be disciplined, especially as Christians. That is because the world we live in has a lot of distractions. If you lack discipline in your focus, you'll get caught up. To top up the distractions, discipline is also painful, only a few are willing to pay the price. But understand that you need to give up on present satisfaction to get future gratification that we can't feel now. After all, you only see the reward after the sacrifice.

There is a reward for discipline, God rewards discipline. The Bible encourages discipline in many parts of scripture, and one that you can read is 1 Timothy 4:7 in Paul's letter to young Timothy. Discipline is important for every believer, especially in this generation where one can easily get carried away by life. A believer who lacks discipline in their ways of living can be confusing to unbelievers and also confused for one. Similarly, a lack of discipline in a Christian's life causes them to flow with the world. That's why Paul said: "I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Hence, every Christian needs to exercise self-discipline if they want to be like Jesus. The discipline a Christian follows is for godliness, holiness and conformity to Christ. Being disciplined will contribute greatly to your being, your works and duty here on Earth. Because when you get to heaven, what would you want God to say about you? You would want Him to say: "Well done good and faithful servant".

If that is what you desire to hear Him say it to you, then you need to be disciplined. It is by discipline that one can fulfil the mission that God has given them.

Discipline helps to shape an individual, discipline prepares you to be a good steward of what God has for you. The bottom line is that living for God requires discipline, and those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:24). Indeed there are times one might decide to follow a certain discipline and still fail at it. But that's where the grace of God comes in, to sustain you where you can't sustain yourself. This goes to say that discipline goes hand in hand with grace (1 Cor 15:10). It is grace that helps you stay disciplined and not your strength. Grace gives you the sustenance to work harder and stay committed.

Through grace, God uses three means to make us Christ-like. These three means are PEOPLE, CIRCUMSTANCES and SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE (prayer). With PEOPLE, you have reduced control over them, however, you choose who you allow in your circle. With CIRCUMSTANCES, you have no control over them and this is God playing His part in conforming you to His image. The circumstance will refine us in our disciplines so that we grow. We do have control over how we react through the circumstances we face. With SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE, you have control over it, you can decide in your heart to pray daily, read daily and fellowship more.

Since we have control over our spiritual discipline, it is wise to take advantage of it. God will not come down and make you disciplined, the grace is available for that, but you still have a role to play because grace invites us to co-labour. There is a partnership between God and man. Discipline is the way to godliness and freedom from the world. If you seek to live a disciplined life, firstly, ask God to show you in what areas you require discipline so that you can become aware of these areas. If you are unaware of your indiscipline, you won't see the need for change.

That's why the Psalmist says in Psalms 139:23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" And after becoming aware, decide to become disciplined in your ways with God's help. You also need to pray. Breaking bad habits can be difficult, so pray to God to help you and trust Him. Make decisions based on discipline and not how you feel.

Decide by faith to become a disciplined person and God will see you through. Faith will help you look beyond temporal pleasures and see the greater reward just like Moses did (see Hebrews 11:24-25). A decision to live a disciplined lifestyle is done because you believe that what God has planned for you is greater than anything you can imagine for yourself.

Live a life of discipline in all areas, in your studies, career and even in relationships. Become unshakable in your discipline and pursue them regardless of the challenges. A practical approach of doing this is by having a scorecard or journal to track your habit so you see how you spend your time. Then you can analyze what is working and what isn't, and you work on it. Change the habits that don't serve God's purpose in your life, because the reward is too great to be missed.

