

DARING TO DISCIPLINE
(Part One)
"Dangers Vs. Benefits"

Adapted from Richard Foster in *Celebration Of Discipline* New. York: HarperCollins 1978 / 98.
(p.p. xii to 11)

Text: 1 Corinthians 9.24 – 27 (in pew Bible p. 1134 / in large print Bible p. 1764)

Intro: -Richard Foster laments the spiritual bankruptcy of the North American church.

- Christianity is 10 kms. wide and 2.5 cms. deep.
- problem = massive disconnect between our belief & behavior.

-Leo Tolstoy observes: Everybody thinks of changing humanity and nobody thinks of changing himself [or herself].

-today's text puts forth the illustration of an athlete undergoing disciplined training in order to win a prize.

- prize will last forever – eminent value (v. 25).
 - incorruptible crown when we stand before judgment seat of Christ.
- vigorous disciplined training demanded to win the prize (v. v. 25 & 27).
 - no aimless shadow boxing / disconnect between belief & behaviour (v.26).
 - saying “no” to legitimate things in order to be fit.
- laxness will result in being disqualified (v. 27).
 - sacrifice immediate gains for eternal joys.
 - actually preparing for the race, being in the race & finishing the race.

-the 40 days of Lent offer us an opportunity to be liberated from the suffocating pressure of our culture.

- various disciples practiced during Lent to help prepare us to observe the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- for centuries, Christians have practiced Spiritual Disciplines in order to encounter God and find spiritual enrichment.
- during this season of Lent we will explore the disciplines of meditation, prayer, study, service, confession, and worship.

-God dares us to disciple ourselves for the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4.8), the crown of life (James 1.12; Revelation 2.10), and the crown of glory (1 Peter 5.4).

Take Home Point:

-Spiritual Disciplines are tools which help us to reach above the physical world to enter deep spiritual life.

- today we will consider some general aspects of Spiritual Disciplines to understand the dangers and benefits of these disciplines.

1. SLAVERY OF INGRAINED HABITS

-D. Elton Trueblood:

- greatest problems are not technological – *we can handle that.*
- greatest problems are moral & spiritual.
 - we will not survive as a culture *if we don't make progress.*
 - advanced cultures have declined when moral and spiritual problems were unaddressed.
 - illust. Out Of Control

-sin will kill you:

- soul that sins will die (e.g. law of gravity - Ezekiel 18.4 & 20).
- our sins block God's face from us *and make it impossible for God to hear us (i.e. God's holy nature prevents fellowship with "darkness" - Isaiah 59.2).*

-we normally deal with sin by using our will *to launch a frontal attack.*

- set our will to stop: *anger, fear, bitterness, gluttony, greed, pride, & lust.*

-“will worship” is how we try to live most of our lives.

You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the **rules** of the world, such as, “Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!”? Such **rules** are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. These **rules** may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires (Colossians 2.20 - 23).

-commonly there is a temporary outward show of success.

- surface changes but heart is still bound by ingrained habits.
- sooner or later, in an unguarded moment, a careless word or act will slip out to reveal the true condition of the heart.

-illust. John Galliano also Bobby Fischer, David Ahenakew, Mel Gibson.

2. LIBERATION OF ENRICHING PRACTICES

-internal heart transformation is God's work, not ours.

- however, this will not happen by simply sitting on our hands and waiting for God to transform us.
- Bible calls us to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in order to experience change.

-vigorous disciplined training demanding to win the prize (v. v. 25 & 27).

- laxness will result in being disqualified (v. 27).

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God (Romans 8.12 - 14).

Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. 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 9.24 - 27).

-what we plant in the Spirit, *we will reap into eternal life* (Galatians 6.8).

- farmer cannot cause the grain to grow but he must cultivate & fertilize the soil, plant & fertilize the seed, and water the crop.

-Spiritual Disciplines are how we sow to the Spirit.

- by themselves, they are powerless (**i.e.** “will worship”) but they are tools for moving us to a place where we are open to God's influence and blessing.

-as we practice Spiritual Disciplines:

- we find that God increasingly controls our hearts.
- in an unguarded moment there will be a spontaneous flow of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5.22, 23).

-**illust.** Mennonites saving their persecutors from drowning.

Conclusion:

1. Know what God wants.

-there is a desperate need today, not for Christians to be more intelligent or gifted but for Christians to be deeper and more genuine.

-Richard Foster prays: May God give you and me the courage, the wisdom, the strength always us to hold the kingdom of God as the number one priority in our lives.

- to do this is to practice the Spiritual Disciplines.
- Spiritual Disciplines are tools which help us to reach above the physical world to enter deep spiritual life.

-say “yes” to God's dare to discipline!

- **illust.** Gem Cutter's \$3 Million Mistake

2. Know how to do what God wants.

-during Lent we provide a concentrated opportunity for you to draw nearer to God

Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy;
Break up your fallow ground, For *it is* time to seek the LORD,
Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.

You have plowed wickedness; You have reaped iniquity.
You have eaten the fruit of lies, Because you trusted in your own way,
In the multitude of your mighty men (Hosea 10.12, 13).

-Ash Wednesday / 6 Sundays of Lent & Communion / mid-week Lent studies –
Christ Empowered Living / Good Friday Service.

-**illust.** Disturbing Bedding Plants.

3. Know that you will do it.

-**Closing Hymn:** O For A Closer Walk With God (all verses).

Out Of Control

According to the Reuters news service, on Wednesday, November 9, 1994, Geoffrey Mayne of West Haven, Connecticut, pulled his car up to an intersection and thought he noticed a problem with his brakes. He shifted the car into park and got out of the car to check his wheels. With no one in the driver's seat, the car suddenly slipped into reverse and took off backward at high speed. The steering wheel spun, and the car began to circle round and round in the middle of the busy intersection.

The police and fire departments were called. The car kept circling at high speed, blocking morning rush hour traffic. Almost two hours passed with no end in sight. Finally the authorities devised a plan. They positioned tractor trailers to block the traffic. Then they simultaneously drove three front-end payloaders – the type used for earth moving – into the out-of-control car. With the car pinned, firefighters broke the driver's side window, reached in, and turned off the ignition.

The car, as you would guess, suffered extensive damage.

Like runaway car without a driver, people without spiritual discipline are a hazard to themselves and everyone around them. In the end, they are pinned only by painful necessity – debt, divorce, sickness, depression, unemployment, total rejection. How much better it is to be under control – God's control at the wheel and save yourself the pain and expense of a life, lived out of control (Craig Brian Larson *750 Engaging Illustrations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, p. 496).

John Galliano

“Galliano apologizes for ‘odious’ outburst”

PARIS (Reuters) — Disgraced designer John Galliano apologized “ unreservedly” on Wednesday for behaviour which has cost him his job at luxury label Christian Dior and changed his fortunes overnight from fashion star to figure of ridicule.

Dior said on Wednesday it intended to go ahead with its Friday ready to wear show one day after it fired Galliano for his “odious” behaviour on a widely viewed video showing its former chief designer spewing anti-Semitic insults and expressing his admiration for Adolf Hitler.

Galliano, who had been with Dior since 1996, said in a statement that anti-Semitism and racism “ have no part in our society” and “ unreservedly” apologized for causing any offence.

The fallen star is expected to hear by the end of the week whether Paris prosecutors will put him on trial for uttering anti-Semitic insults after complaints he hurled racist abuse at people in a Paris bar last Thursday and in October.

The video surfaced after the accusations were made public and has raced across the Internet. It shows Galliano in a bar wearing a funny grey hat, looking a little worse for wear and slurring anti-Semitic insults into the camera (*The StarPhoenix* March 3, 2011 - C 10).

Gem Cutter's \$3 Million Mistake

Allegedly, just two years after the discovery of tanzanite in 1967, a Maasai tribesman knocked on the door of a gem cutter's office in Nairobi, Kenya. The Maasai had brought along an enormous chunk of tanzanite and he was looking to sell. His asking price? - \$50.00. But the gem cutter was suspicious and assumed that a stone so large could only be glass. The cutter told the tribesman, no thanks, and sent him on his way. Huge mistake. It turned out that the gem was genuine and would have easily dwarfed the world's largest cut tanzanite at the time. Based on common pricing, that "chunk" could have been close to \$3 million (Barbara Peck, ed. of *Endless Vacation RCI*. endlessvacation.com, Spring 2011, p. 39).

Disturbing Bedding Plants

Jan Riegenbach, a gardening columnist wrote an article about how to plant bedding plants. "giving new bedding plants some rough treatment at planting time may be the best thing you can do to help them survive in the garden. When I was new to gardening, I tried to set tomatoes, petunias, and other bedding plants in the garden without disturbing their roots at all. Nowadays, I'm much more ruthless ...

"I squeeze the bottoms of the flexible plastic pots to get the plants out of their container and then I inspect the soil ball.

"If the plant has been growing in its pot so long that the roots are circling the bottom, I jab my finger into the bottom of the soil and pull down to untangle the roots ... If the whole pot is filled with circling roots; that's better than allowing the roots to continue to circle when the plants are growing in the garden. Most bedding plants shrug off this rough treatment."

Christians often resemble root bound plants. We grow complacent and comfortable where we are. Our roots circle around and around in the same small area, no longer reaching out for life and nourishment and growth. The healthiest thing God can do for us is shake up our roots and put us in new soil (Craig Brian Larson *750 Engaging Illustrations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, p. 47, 48).