



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

By J.J. Turner

We have recently been impressed by athletes from around the world who participated in the Olympic Games in China. The performances were amazing; sometimes only split-seconds separating gold medals from silver or bronze. To me what was even more impressive was the discipline and training each athlete had undergone in order to qualify and prepare for events. A lifetime of training for a few minutes of excellence. We all admire discipline.

Discipline is a key to success in every endeavor of life. This is why we shouldn't be surprised to learn that God requires spiritual and physical discipline in the attitudes and actions of His children. Spiritual discipline is a fruit of a follower of Christ. Webster defines discipline as, "1. *punish*, 2. *to train or develop by instruction and exercise especially in self-control* 3. *to bring under control; to impose order upon.*"

The Bible uses the word **temperance** (KJV) to describe discipline. The Greek word is *enkrateia* and refers to "strength, self-control; exercising self-control; moderate in all things." The apostle Peter wrote that temperance (self-control) is one of the major ingredients in the success of our spiritual growth: "And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness" (2 Peter 1:6). Self-control is a command, not an option.

The apostle Paul admonishes us to participate in spiritual exercise in order to develop spiritual discipline: "But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:7, 8).

Here are a few spiritual disciplines we should be engaging in on a daily basis: (1) prayer (1 Thess. 5:17), (2) Bible study (2 Tim. 2:15), (3) doing the word (Jas. 1:22,23), (4) helping those in need (Jas. 1:27; Gal. 6:10), (5) producing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-26), (6) holiness in lifestyle (1 Pet. 1:15, 16), and (7) sharing the word with others (Matt. 28:18-20). These are commands, too!



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As we “run with patience” (Heb. 12:1), daily disciplining ourselves in the race, a crown of life will be ours (Rev. 2:10).