



A Challenging Word

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DISCIPLING MEN

Let me start this article by saying, it is essential that men are disciplined by men and women by women. There is very implicit evidence in scripture that would favor a gender specific relationship. It's not so much that one gender couldn't disciple the other. It's just that one gender shouldn't disciple the other. I realize that there may arise situations where such preferences are not possible, but these should be the exception not the rule.

Dr. Howard Hendricks once said, "Every one needs a Paul, a Timothy and a Barnabus. Christian men are bombarded with so many things that are pleading with their soul to compromise their responsibilities and contradict their masculinity. All men need someone like Paul, someone who has run the race far enough and can share the pitfalls, failures victories and successes. Every man needs someone like Timothy to pour his life into and instruct along the way. And each man needs an encourager. Barnabus-like men are difficult to find. They are the type of men that will keep us accountable and transparent. So when trials comes, the opportunity to become isolated and cutoff will not an option. With so much emphasis being placed on choosing sexual success and virility over spiritual development and biblically oriented, God-ordained fulfillment, it seems that to become complacent is a no-brainer. After years of working with Christian men, old and young, I have learned that it is imperative that we are prepared to give a well-rounded application to Luke 2:52.

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

When considering the process of discipling men, the text reveals four areas essential for well-rounded development.

- 1) Mental discipline, "Jesus increased in wisdom..."
- 2) Physical discipline "and in stature..."
- 3) Spiritual discipline, "and in favor with God..."
- 4) Social discipline, "and man."

MENTAL DISCIPLINE

"A man that doesn't think is dangerous." One of the men who trained me in leadership hammered that in my head. Why? Because, men, in general, are inherently lazy and that particular trait will eventually be detrimental at the most crucial time. This is due largely to the fact that over the process of time and with the advent of the westernized self-centered culture, men have been allowed to become mentally lethargic. Society has worked tirelessly to take away from us the necessity to cogitate at the abstract level. I find that even when dealing with the intellects of the university educated or corporate level upper management types, there is a depressing drought of men who want or are capable of wrestling with a passage of scripture or a problem in life until the truth is revealed or a solution presents itself. So often, I am criticized for using the thicker English texts when I speak or teach, i.e., King James, New American Standard, or the more recent English Standard versions of scripture. The comments are "those translations are so difficult to read and understand!" That's the point! They force me to study the text for myself and they make me explain it to my listeners. If there is any area of life where I want to be forced to work and mine for rich treasure, it is in the areas of the study and presentation of God's word.

In discipling the Christian male, there must be extensive mental challenges that will engage the mind and create positive habits of study. Nothing of value in this walk of faith is worthy of mastery if it can be obtained with little or no effort. Paul's admonishment to Timothy was clear, "Until I come, give attention to reading, exhortation and doctrine" (I Tim. 4:13). In other words, "while I am away, don't become lazy" (paraphrase mine). He warns him to work, to "... Neglect not the gift that is in thee...Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy

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profiting may appear to all.” (I Tim 4:14,15). This is a challenge and an instruction to work hard at a task until it is successful completed. We are at war with the mediocre. We are in a struggle to accept the bare essentials and settling for less. It is easy to see why the body of Christ seems listless and anemic. May it not be so with those we seek to disciple.

PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE

I know what you’re saying, “When are we going to get to the part that’s important”. It seems that discussions about anything other than spiritual matters seem unnecessary. The truth is, that, somehow we have tried to be so careful to include everything about the bible and it’s teaching that we forget that Paul’s prayer for the Thessalonians was that the whole man, “spirit, soul and body, be preserved blameless”. (I Thess. 5:23) We need to remember that discipleship is about forming Christ-like character in others. Developing a complete Christian is more than just teaching them a great way to do bible study or how to lead someone to Christ. It’s also about living and being alive! Somewhere along the way, we have divorced the concept of personal physical health and accountability from the need to have a holy lifestyle that honors God. Although there seems to be well-meaning discussion about spiritual maturity and accountability, there is far too little conversation about the care of the temple of the Holy Spirit. Even when Paul discussed priority of godliness over physical exercise, he does not dismiss the value of physical development, but states that it’s value is smaller than that of a godly life. We might want to re-think the importance of a holistic posture: one that incorporates holy living and a holy lifestyle.

Paul instructs his apprentice Timothy to care for his physical well being. Before God we are responsible to give great care and investment to all things given to us. How hindered is the servant of God to fulfill His ultimate purpose for them, if, because of poor hygiene their witness is compromised. Or what a sad commentary to a life spent in the Master’s service, cut short because of health problems caused by failing to care for our bodies. Our appearance is the first contact we make with the world around us. When the text records that Jesus “increased in stature” it’s not merely saying He grew up. It also means that He matured. Such maturation implies a care for His body and His lifestyle. Included in John’s words “And He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him”, is the acute and profound understanding that God was pleased with every aspect of His life. (John 8:29) You would be hard pressed to convince anyone that our Lord could totally please the Father without being responsible for the manner in which He treated His body. When calling men to follow us as we follow Christ, the onus lays with the discipler to keep the disciple aware of holiness within and without. Yes, our warfare is not carnal; yes, our weaponry is not flesh and blood based. Nevertheless, the house that we wage war from is physical and should be treated with honor and respect.

Written By Dwight Edward Knight*

**Up-coming Event: The Journey: A Summit on Christian Manhood
April 11th-13th, 2008 Marriot Courtyard Beach Resort,
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
For more information and to register go to:
www.challenge-ministries.org**

*The continuation of this article on **Discipling Men** (Spiritual and Social Disciplines) will continue in the next few issues. This article is taken from a chapter by Melissa Hansen’s book, **Discipleship**, which is in prepublication form at this time.