

Discipline Begins with Your Mind

by Bubba Garner

A disciple is just that—one who is disciplined, one who has brought his thoughts, his behavior, and his emotions under the control of Christ. He is a dedicated and devoted follower, willing to submit his will to His will and to be trained and instructed in His righteousness.

The disciplined mind is where it all begins. The key to taming the tongue, managing the temper, and mastering what comes out the body is the cautious selection of what goes in the mind (Mark 7:21-23). One of the reasons Christians get caught up in worldliness and immorality is because we meditate on the worldly and immoral and don't discriminate against that which defiles the mind and heart.

Several years ago, the NAACP came out with the slogan "the mind is a terrible thing to waste", and such a saying reminds us that there is a lot of waste out there on which the mind can be spent and squandered. Solomon instructed his son to "watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life" (Prov. 4:23). To watch means "to keep" or to discipline and involves carefully shielding and protecting. How ironic that we live in a health-conscious age when the same people who watch what they eat, examine the food labels, and take the recommended vitamins to care for their bodies allow all kinds of pollutants and impurities to contaminate their minds.

Consider some simple suggestions about how to develop a more disciplined mind.

Aim higher. "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Col. 3:1-2). All who have been buried and raised with Christ should be seeking heavenly things, desiring and striving to secure those things above. But this will not happen accidentally or coincidentally; in order to seek them, you must first set your mind on them. You will see no improvement in tending to your spiritual needs until you make the decision that you are going to do better and set your mind to the task. "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6). Look up and aim a little higher.

Dwell longer. "Brethren, whatever is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute let your mind dwell on these things" (Phil. 4:8). To dwell means "to contemplate" or "to give thoughtful consideration", and it cannot be done in a hurry or half-heartedly. We make plenty of time for the dishonorable and impure but consistently have none left for the things that matter most. Why is it that we know all the lyrics to the popular songs but cannot commit a simple scripture to memory to help us in our time of need? Remember, if you're not thinking it, you're probably not doing it. Get your head in the book and stay a little longer.

Dig deeper. “The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things” (Phil. 4:9). Meditation is naturally followed by application, having the sincerity of heart to put to work what you have learned and to practice what you have comprehended. It does no good to purify the fountain if you do not allow the water to flow and carve its course in the springs of life. Having laid the foundation of a disciplined mind, it’s time to start building and turning good intentions into good deeds. Reach down into the well of your soul and dig a little deeper.

The Lord needs those who will set their hearts on the higher plane of serving Him and not be double-minded in their devotion. He needs those who will turn stumbling blocks into stepping stones, weakness into strength, defeat into victory. He needs those who will submit to His discipline. Make up your mind to do just that.