



Mentor's Tip # 4

The Power of Discipline

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This week we are going to be dealing with the power of discipline. I also want to deal with the conundrum that many believers find themselves in when trying to balance discipline and spontaneity. This will take a little bit of time, but if you will bear with me, you will understand where we are headed.

Foundational Scripture:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NKJV)

²⁴ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*. ²⁵ And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for an imperishable crown*. ²⁶ Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as *one who* beats the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

In many of Paul's epistles, he uses both soldiers and athletes to teach on the necessity of discipline. In a society with Greek influence in athletics and Roman soldiers everywhere enforcing Rome's peace, there were strong visual illustrations for this apostle of God to use.

Today's Athlete

What does the daily life of a professional, cutting edge athlete look like here in the U.S.? Do they sit around all day watching TV and eating junk food? Do they skip all of the practices and strategy sessions and only show up for the games? That may be the way the average American prepares for playing on the Church softball team, but not professional sports where millions of dollars are on the line!

The professional athlete will invest countless hours into practice and training. He will stretch his abilities farther each year, learn new plays and tactics and will only allow foods into his body that build, cleanse and strengthen. He will condition his mind to know every play until he can do them in his sleep. He will condition his body so that he executes each play with effortless grace. When he reaches this level, the opposing team finds it almost impossible to stop him! This is the paradigm that the Apostle Paul speaks from when he relates to ministry! So let's run with that paradigm in this article!

Three Levels of Discipline and Four Areas of Execution

Three Levels of Discipline:

- The Drill
- The Practice
- The Game

Four Areas of Execution:

- Prayer
- Study
- Application
- Articulation

[Side Note: Why is discipline so important? The word "Christian" is only used three times in the New Testament. The word "disciple" is used 270 times. The word "disciple" means "one that disciplines his life after someone's teaching." In this case, it is the teaching of Messiah (God come in the flesh).]

The Three Levels of Discipline

Personally, I have never served on a professional sports team. I have served in the military, so I am prone to use some examples from my time in the military to bring certain points across.

The Drill

Whether you are learning moves in a contact sport, or you are learning how to take apart and reassemble your weapon, the drill is the time that you do it over and over again until you can do it without thinking. No immediate fruit is seen during "the drill" time: just doing the same thing over and over again.

When I was going through basic training in the military, I remember one day we spent the entire afternoon taking our M-16s apart and putting them back together. I felt like I took my weapon apart a thousand times that day, only to put it back together and then start all over again. To this day, I think I could assemble one without even looking at it.

At the end of boot camp, our drill sergeant had us perform a demonstration. We were under enemy fire and our weapons had been taken apart for cleaning. How long do you think it took me to assemble my weapon, load it and prepare to fire? Under a minute! I remember him smiling while he said "Congratulations Lake, you get to live today!"

Many times God takes us through the paces to learn a new spiritual habit. We are in "drill" mode, whether in learning to pray, study, apply certain biblical principles or articulate it to the universe. We see no immediate fruit; we just do it over and over again. This is where discipline is so important. Do it just like God told you to do it. Do not deviate from the example. Do it until it becomes second nature to you. You are building a foundation from which to live your life and to minister from.

The Practice

Once you have the basic foundation laid in some areas, God will require you not to be so rigid in the implementation of a thing. In practice, you take the basics of what you have learned and practice flexibility, spontaneity and innovation in your implementation. The discipline is still there, but you have matured to the point where you can join two or three concepts together "on the fly" to counter what an opponent is doing.

I remember an episode from The Unit that I really enjoyed. This episode gave more background on the unit's newest member (Bob) and how he qualified to become part of this elite team. They had placed a large pile of parts to various handguns in front of these soldiers. They were instructed to put them together blindfolded; they had to use all the parts and there were five weapons there to be assembled. When the first soldier finished, he had five handguns that appeared to be assembled correctly, but he had extra parts. The instructor asked him "Why? Could he guarantee that the five he had assembled would fire, since he had extra parts?" Needless to say, he failed the exercise and never made it to the unit. Then there was Bob. He set there with a big smile on his face. He did not have five weapons, he had seven. Five of them were standard issue and two were smaller weapons. When he was asked how he came up with seven weapons, he responded: "Easy! Start with five and add two!" He demonstrated that he was able to assess the situation, recognize the parts from the standard issue handguns, assemble them and managed to assemble two others that were thrown into the mix. Because of his dedication to discipline, he was able to think creatively and had tipped the odds in his favor. (When you are in a gun fight, seven is better than five.)

After we have submitted to the preparation time of the drills, God will take us through practice rounds in our lives. These times are more "supervised," but ample opportunity is given to us to improvise what we have learned in the basics.

The sad part is that many of us never really get to this level because we will not submit to the drills. We pray and hear nothing. We study and nothing is exciting or life changing. Then we are told to do it all over again. Why? So that when we enter into a situation we know nothing about, we will pray and study our way out of it! If the basics are not in place, you have nothing to stand on to help you overcome. Maybe this is why so many Christians run from meeting to meeting trying to find what they never received in the drills – they are looking for someplace to give them a footing in the game of life!

The Game

You know the basic moves. You could do them in your sleep. You have shown the ability to be creative in their application and execution. Now you are facing the giants. You rely on two things: your knowledge of the basics and your ability to hear your coach from the sidelines giving commands. You see, in the game, the coach is the Holy Spirit. You finely tuned your spirit man to Him all of those times you were in prayer. You filled your mind with His game plans when you were in study. Now it is time for the real thing – **welcome to ministry**. The Holy Spirit (your coach) is counting on you knowing what He is talking about when He tells you how to handle the enemy and to bring victory to the situation.

"Take this concept! Implement it before the enemy realizes what you are doing. Good. Now use the name of Jesus. Quick, plead the Blood. Now cast it out! That a boy. You did that with grace!"

A fellow that has not done his homework will not recognize these commands: he will pause, stumble and fall.

As we mature, we will be in various places in this cycle. You may be able to play the game with certain moves, but when you are learning something new, you go back to the drills!

The Four Areas of Execution

1. Prayer

Prayer is a routine, a discipline, a source of life and a conversation. It takes on all of these forms at various times in our lives.

There are many times I have prayed and heard nothing, felt nothing and thought it was a waste of time. So I pushed in harder, stretched further and disciplined myself to keep going no matter what. Then all of a sudden it is like God is right there and drops so much into my spirit man that it takes months to work through it all.

I have asked God about the quiet times. He always refers me back to this scripture:

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)

⁶ But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

God wanted to reward me with new revelation; before He could, I had to diligently seek Him.

The discipline of diligence in seeking Him opened the door to the reward of revelation.

I can also add that it helped develop a greater sensitivity to His voice and presence. The more I seek Him, the more I become aware of Him and am able to hear His voice in the den of life's circumstances.

2. Study

Study is not something you do to make it through Seminary. It is what you do to make it through life! Seminary is the place where you learn the art of study (drill time). We have you study and study and study and study and study and study. It becomes second nature to you. When the enemy throws something at you that is unfamiliar, you instinctively do two things: (1) You seek the face of God about it and (2) you go to your library and search out answers to what is going on.

Proverbs 25:2 (NKJV)

² *It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter. You are never going to get to the deep things of God until you instinctively respond through diligent prayer and study!*

3. Application

What good is all that prayer and study without application? How can application be executed correctly without prayer and study?

God wants you to be victorious and prosper in every situation. But He is limited. God is limited by you. 3 John 2 tells us that God wants us to be in health and prosper, but the limitation is "as your soul prospers." If you have only learned mole hill moving faith, how are you going to move mountains?

Everything in the Word of God falls into two categories: relationship or application. If my relationship is right with God and His Word, I am in a powerful position for application. Do it just like in the drills: observe what the enemy is trying to do and adjust your strategy. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit as He gives you insights on new ways to apply the basics. Remember, Jesus always moved in authority and power, but He seldom ministered the same way twice. (He always kept the enemy confused and off guard.)

4. Articulation

There are four places that we speak and move in authority. We speak to: (1) God, (2) man, (3) the spirit world and (4) to physical circumstances. This is where discipline will pay off. You will know where to speak, how to speak and what to say. Through discipline in the drills and practice, you will understand basic and now advanced warfare. You can sense where the Holy Spirit is leading you before He tells you. You have studied the enemy enough to know his moves and already have several counter punches in mind to block his advances.

Many believers and many ministers never get to application and articulation because they have no discipline in prayer and study! It is time to stop flying by the seat of your pants and to become a disciplined, matured soldier of Christ!



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