

How to Discipline Yourself

An Exercise to Help You Exercise Your Will “Muscle” and ENJOY It!



I need help with disciplining myself to do things I don't like. How about you? I've had many successes—and many failures. This material is a result of the Lord convicting me to get serious about changing those areas in my life where I was consistently failing.

I've delineated here many of the principles God has shown me in how to discipline myself better. I have by no means arrived, but I have experienced victory when I apply them consistently. Now it's your turn to get serious and use this information.

Before you get started, remember that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you (Phil 4:13)—including changing bad habits and attitudes or disciplining yourself to do some difficult activity. God is in the transformation business! If you do it *His* way and in *His* power, you will have victory!

I. REVIEW THE BASICS

Please read and/or listen to my 4-part blog series on *How to Discipline Yourself*. Here are the links (A free audio download is available):

[How to Discipline Yourself \(Part 1\)— Exercising Our Will “Muscle”](#)

[How to Discipline Yourself \(Part 2\)—10 Steps to Lasting Change](#)

[How to Discipline Yourself \(Part 3\)—10 Steps to Lasting Change](#)

[How to Discipline Yourself \(Part 4\)—3 Keys in Making Discipline Pleasurable](#)

II. ASSESS

If you want to change, you need to evaluate what, why, and so on. So take out pen, paper, and an open heart before the Lord and ask Him for help. The questions below serve only as a guideline to get your brain in gear. The Holy Spirit is your true Guide. If you’ve never done anything like this with the Lord, this blog and pdf will be helpful:

[*A Key to Spiritual Growth: Self Evaluation WITH the Holy Spirit*](#)

[*How to Self-Evaluate with the Holy Spirit: A 10 Step Process*](#)

1. What do you want to change?

A habit, your weight, an attitude? Develop a consistent quiet time? Read the Bible more?

If you listed more than 1, pick the most important one after prayer and discussion with any people involved (you’ll need their support). You should only work on *one* major change at a time.

2. Why do you want to change?

What are the benefits of this change?

What are the consequences of not changing?

Does this change glorify God? _____

Write your “Why” Statement here:

3. Determine *your* hindrances

Everyone has their own hindrances. Our past experiences, weaknesses, strengths, and makeup all vary. Knowing what they are will help you develop winning strategies.

Have you attempted change in this area before? _____

Did you achieve any success? Describe.

What hindered your success? (i.e. under what circumstances did you fail?)

What's standing in your way now?

In general, under what conditions do you find yourself more prone to fail? Is it when you are:

Hungry, angry, lonely, tired, other?

What are your weaknesses and negative tendencies? (e.g. are you impatient, lazy, critical, overly sensitive, fearful, or unmotivated?)

Under what conditions do you succeed more frequently?

What are your strengths (e.g. Are you organized, a doer, compassionate, have expertise in something, on fire for the Lord?)

What are your personality traits? (e.g. Are you emotional or laid back? Hyper or calm? Leader or follower?)

Note:

- Personality traits are neither right or wrong. They are simply how God has made us.
- Any strength can be turned into a negative if we become prideful or use it in a selfish way.
- Any weakness can be turned into an asset, if we view them as a means to depend more upon God and an opportunity to see His mighty hand come through!

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor 12:9-10)

III. COMMIT

Are you serious about making this change? _____

Re-examine your “why” in question 2.

- Is it clear and specific? _____
- Does it include God and others? _____
- Does it have a strong emotional component to help you persist during weak moments? _____
- Will it be worth the cost of changing? _____

If your answer to any of the above was *no*, take the time now and re-think and re-write your “Why.” Ask the Lord to help you. Do not rush through this step. Discuss it with your loved ones. Your love for God and others may be your *only* motivation—but it will be enough. True agape (sacrificial) love always is. Jesus loved you enough

to endure the cross. He looked ahead to the joy of redeeming your soul from hell (Heb 12:2)!

If you don't *want* to change strongly enough, you will not be successful.

Here are some good and bad examples of a “Why” statement for losing weight:

- I want to lose weight so I can look good and fit into my clothes. (*vague and self-centered*)
- I'd like to lose weight soon. I want to be healthier. (*vague and non-committal*)
- I want to lose 20 pounds so I can fit into my clothes and look good for my husband. (*specific and unselfish—good, but doesn't include God*)
- I am committed to losing weight for the sake of my health, my family who wants me around for a long time, *and* so that I'll have energy to serve my King. My goal is to lose ___# pounds by ___. (*specific, strong, and not only for self*)

If applicable, write your modified “Why” statement here:

IV. DEVELOP A PLAN AND STRATEGIES

“If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail!” ~Benjamin Franklin.

It is vital to strategize ahead of time. Otherwise, you will easily succumb to the littlest pressure. If your desired change is godly it will go against your sinful self, the world's way, and the enemy of your soul. *Expect* opposition, but remember Jesus Christ has already won the war!

What is your goal?

What steps do you need to take in order to succeed?

In the particular area you desire to change:

➤ What measures can you take to overcome your weaknesses? Be specific.

Examples:

❖ I will not buy candy in the store, because I know I have less resistance at home.

❖ I'm not typically a motivated person, so I will work extra hard on getting a strong why.

Weakness: _____

What I can do: _____

Weakness: _____

What I can do: _____

Weakness: _____

What I can do: _____

➤ How can you use your strengths? (Example: I'm a good cook, so I'll try new recipes that are healthier. I'll ask friends or find them on the internet.)

V. MAKE THE PROCESS MORE PLEASURABLE

This will vary tremendously between people. Since science has shown that our brains release feel-good hormones with every win (see [Blog Part 4](#)), you need to determine what that win is for you.

In regards to your desired change what would bring a smile to your face? What would bring you pleasure that is greater than that temporary gratification of doing what you're trying to change? Examples:

- The satisfaction of not giving in this time?
- The smile on your loved one's face?
- The grin on Jesus' face as you resisted temptation in His power?
- The heavy guilt you won't feel?

Put some serious thought to this. Reviewing the benefits and consequences you listed above will help (#2 in the assess section).

List some ways you can increase the pleasure or lessen the pain in your situation.

VI. KEEP IT IN THE FORFRONT OF YOUR MIND

- Write down your goal and why statement on a separate card(s). Read it several times daily, and out loud if possible.
- Find relevant Bible verses that you can hide in your heart (Ps 119:11) so that the Holy Spirit can more easily bring them to mind in the heat of the moment—at the point when you'll need them to exercise your will “muscle.”

This is vital because if you want to change your behavior, you'll need to change your thinking, and replace lies with truth. That takes repetition. Therefore, repeatedly read, ponder, and speak God's truths which are relevant to what you are trying to accomplish. The goal is for these truths to deeply penetrate your core being. Make sure they are *specific* truths for *your* specific situation. (See blog: [Are You Drifting through Life? The Necessity of Specificity](#))

Another thing that is very helpful is to personalize your verses. (See the **Personal Example** section below to see what I mean.)

Verses pertinent to your goal (you may also want to write these on separate cards):

VII. GET HELP

I've already alluded to the fact of getting God to help you, but let us not discount the benefit of bringing others into our goals. Whether you ask them to specifically hold you accountable, or simply ask for prayer, it'll go a long way to keep you from giving up.

Who are some people that could help you in this endeavor? _____

In what ways could others help you?

VIII. DEVELOP A "HEAT OF THE MOMENT" STRATEGY

Here are some suggestions for when you're facing temptation:

➤ Remember your "Why."

State it *emphatically, repeatedly, and out loud* if possible (see [My Egg Story](#) blog for an example).

➤ Memorize, believe, and apply 1 Corinthians 10:13:

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand.

When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

(NLT)

- Ask God for
 - ❖ Help in recognizing the temptation (This is actually prior to the “Heat of the Moment”).
 - ❖ Help in recognizing His escape route
 - ❖ The strength to *choose* His way out.

- Call a friend and ask for prayer
- Divert your mind

In regards to your goal, what are some specific things you can do in the “Heat of the Moment? What are some ways you could escape your temptation?

IX. AFTER THE TEMPTATION

If you failed—confess and accept God’s forgiveness. But don’t stop there. Repenting includes evaluating *why* you failed so you can develop ways not to succumb in the future. Recommit and ask God to help you exercise self-control the next time.

If you succeeded—rejoice, celebrate, and thank God for the victory. Believe me, this will greatly help you the next time you face temptation.

X. A PERSONAL EXAMPLE

Here is my example of applying these principles to staying healthy.

My *why* statement:

I am committed to being a good steward of my body. When I am in shape, I feel good and I’m more motivated to accomplish the things my Lord desires. I want to please God with every aspect of my life and serve Him with all of who I am including my body.

My goal is to weigh ___ pounds by ___ so that I’ll be in great shape for my Colorado hiking trip.

Strategy

After examining my hindrances; strengths and weaknesses this is what I need to do to succeed:

- Shop differently at the grocery store
- Exercise self-control inside the store; don't shop while hungry
- Have alternative foods available (e.g. grapes or dried fruit instead of candy)
- Cut down on portion size/count calories
- Eat slower so there's time for my brain to catch up to my stomach.
- Get recipes that are tasty as well as healthy
- Plan meals ahead of time
- Pack my own lunch/snacks when away from home
- Increase exercise from 3x/week to 4-5.
- Have alternative activities to watching TV when I am more prone to eat
- Delay gratification
- Rely on God to help me; allow the Holy Spirit to control me rather than trying to control myself.

Making it more pleasurable/lessening the pain:

Concerning eating:

- If I eat slower, I could savor each bite and enjoy it more
- Think about the poor quality of life my mother had from being diabetic
- Find delicious foods/recipes that are healthier
- I enjoy cooking healthy meals just as much as making a cake

Concerning exercise:

- Keeps me feeling good overall
- I can fit into my clothes
- Improves my appearance
- When my husband was alive, I liked looking good for him; I knew it minimized immoral temptations.
- I know I am doing my part in preventing diabetes and its negative effects.
- I will remember the positive results I've experienced so that I will press on
- I can eat more of what I want if I exercise.
- I found the types of exercise I like to do

- Staying physically fit enables me to go on more spectacular hikes (like [Mount LeConte](#) in the Smokies!).
- Think about my upcoming Colorado hiking trip
- Exercise to upbeat music
- I don't like stretching, but if I don't stretch, I suffer from my chronic sacroiliac joint pain. This limits my ability to walk and hike—not to mention the discomfort of pain.

These were my reasons at first, but now it's also because:

- Music moves my soul and I love to hear and sing praises to the Lord during exercise. It has become a time of worship for me.
- I know it pleases the Lord that I want to stay healthy so I can serve Him well.

My pertinent paraphrased Bible verses:

The grace of God teaches me to say **No** to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live a **self-controlled**, upright and godly life in this present age, while I wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of my great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. (Tit 2:11-13)

His divine power has given me everything I need to live a godly life through my knowledge of Him who called me by His very own glory and goodness. Through these He has given me His very great and precious promises, so that through them I would be able to participate in the divine nature and escape worldly desires. Therefore, I will make every effort to add to my faith: goodness, knowledge, **self-control**, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. For when I possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep me from being ineffective and unproductive in my knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Pet 1:3-8)

Everything is permissible for me, but not all things are beneficial. I will not be mastered by anything. I am a slave of Christ, not this! (1 Cor 6:12)

I can do all things through Christ, including resisting this. (Phil 4:13)

Some of my “Heat of the Moment” strategies:

- Since my most creative and productive time for studying and writing is in the morning, I typically workout mid-afternoon. But unless I set an alarm I often forget, or procrastinate too long.
- Since I often want to snack while watching TV, I try to do something else or do a craft (like knitting) while watching TV.
- Plead with God to help me.

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I pray that this tool has been helpful to you in exercising your will “muscle.” These principles do work because they are based on the Word of God. You and I simply need to apply and keep applying them in order to live more self-disciplined lives.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me: [rose@heisworthit.com](mailto:rose@heisworthit.com). I am on the *same* journey as you: learning to live a life worthy and pleasing to our Savior who is worth all the effort! To God be the glory!

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Col 3:23-24)*



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