



The Good News

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The Necessity of Self-Control

By Matt Smith and Michael McCleary

Webster's online dictionary describes discipline as, "*behavior in accord with rules or conduct; behavior and order maintained by training and control.*" Discipline is a necessary component of any practice that requires an expertise or a high level of quality; the best musicians, athletes, writers, programmers, drivers, shooters, golfers, etc., will almost invariably list discipline as one of the most fundamental tenets of their trade. If one wishes to become better at a given activity or pursuit, they must incorporate discipline into their lives in order to improve their ability to perform such activities and pursuits.

Christianity is no different. For the Christian, discipline can sometimes better be described as self-control, as we attempt to control ourselves in such a way as to conform to the will of God. For the Christian, there is quite possibly no greater tool or asset we can possess, outside of a desire to serve God, than self-control; discipline is at the very heart of our lives as Christians.

It doesn't take much effort to find in God's Word the place discipline must have in our lives. 2 Tim 1:7, tells us that, "...God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and **self-control.**" This is one of the more profound verses concerning discipline because of its point-blank statement about the nature of our spirit. There is no misunderstanding possible with such a pointed statement. In Gal 5:22, 23, Paul lists for us the fruits of the spirit; among them is **self-control**. In these two passages we can observe the absolute fundamental presence that discipline and self-control must have in the godly person. In Heb 5:14, we're told that the higher knowledge of God is fit for those of us who are mature in our faith and have **trained** ourselves to be

more able to discern good and evil. We see from this verse that discipline is necessary, even vital, to our salvation—for what man or woman can claim to be able to discern good and evil without the knowledge given to us by God in His Word? What strong Christian exists without training themselves to be able to determine good and evil? Training through self-control, then, is essential. Staying in Hebrews, we find in Heb 12:1 that we are to run the race in front of us with **endurance**. Endurance is gained through training, and training is accomplished through discipline. Romans 13:14 tells us to make no provision for the lusts of the flesh; how can we make certain those lusts are not a part of our lives if we do not live a disciplined life? Again in 2 Tim 3:16, 17, we read, "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, for **correction and training** in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." Romans 5:3, 4 says, "...we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that **tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character;** and proven character, hope." How are we to develop perseverance without discipline? How do we suffer our tribulations in a godly manner without self-control? Perhaps the one verse that underlines the life of a Christian as well as any other is 1 Cor 9:27: "...but I **discipline** my body and make it my slave so that, after I have preached to others, *I myself will not be disqualified.*" What good is our teaching if we do not live what we teach others? What value is there in empty words?

How disciplined is our approach to our own lives?