



PART 3

AN APPROVED WORKMAN: LEADERSHIP HELD TO A BIBLICAL STANDARD

Chapter Ten

HOW NOT TO BE DISQUALIFIED

And thus Paul highlighted for us another critical, indispensable, and supremely important quality every leader must maintain: *A leader is disciplined.*

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #23 **A LEADER IS DISCIPLINED**

“Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate [moderate, self-restrained, not given to excess] in all things,” he said in [1 Corinthians 9:25](#).

[1 Corinthians 9:25 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁵ “Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control [**temperate [moderate, self-restrained, not given to excess]**] in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath [crown], but we an imperishable.”

You can't break the training regimen and win. That is true not only in athletics. It is true in everything. It is *especially* true in leadership.

Genuine success always comes at a high price. Every athlete knows this. That is why athletes regulate their sleep, what they eat, and how they exercise. It's not a part-time effort. For those who want to excel, it is a constant, nonstop responsibility.

Discipline has to become a passion. It isn't merely a question of doing whatever is mandatory and avoiding whatever is prohibited. It involves voluntary self-denial. An athlete has every right



to eat a full eight-course dinner just before he runs the 100-yard dash. That's his privilege. But it's not smart. And if he doesn't sacrifice that right, he's not going to win.

Paul began [1 Corinthians 9](#) by making this very point. He had every right to be financially supported by those he ministered to ([vv. 1-15](#)).

1 Corinthians 9:1-15 (NASB)

¹ "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?"

² If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

³ My defense to those who examine me is this:

⁴ Do we not have a right to eat and drink?

⁵ Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?

⁶ Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?

⁷ Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?

⁸ I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things?

⁹ For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He?

¹⁰ Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher *to thresh* in hope of sharing *the crops*.

¹¹ If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

¹² If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

¹³ Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the *food* of the temple, *and* those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar?

¹⁴ So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

¹⁵ But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one."

He had waived that right for their sake ([vv. 12, 15](#)), choosing to support himself as a tentmaker while he was living among them ([Acts 18:3](#)).

1 Corinthians 9:12 (NASB)

¹² "If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ."



1 Corinthians 9:15 (NASB)

¹⁵“But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one.”

Acts 18:3 (NASB)

³“And because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.”

1 Corinthians 9:18 (NASB)

¹⁸“What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.”

1 Corinthians 10:23 (NASB)

²³“All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.”

He had voluntarily relinquished his apostolic rights for the sake of the Corinthians.

They, on the other hand, were so concerned about claiming their own rights that they were suing one another in secular courts ([1 Corinthians 6:1-7](#)).

1 Corinthians 6:1-7 (NASB)

¹“Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?

²Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent *to constitute* the smallest law courts?

³Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?

⁴So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church?

⁵I say *this* to your shame. *Is it so, that* there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren,

⁶but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?

⁷Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?”

They were defiling the Lord’s Supper by turning it into a contest over who got there first and who could get the most ([1 Corinthians 11:21](#)).

1 Corinthians 11:21 (NASB)

²¹“For in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.”

They were so busy grasping at their rights, they were losing the prize. They were destroying their testimony and fragmenting the fellowship of the church. Virtually every problem in that church reflected a lack of discipline—an inability to control themselves and an unwillingness to forgo their own rights.

CH-110 LEADERSHIP 1

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Lecture # 63



They desperately needed to follow Paul's example and show a little self-control. After all, if athletes can discipline themselves for the sake of a perishable prize, Christians certainly ought to be willing to do the same **“for an imperishable crown”** ([1 Corinthians 9:25](#)).

Why is discipline important? Discipline teaches us to operate by principle rather than desire. Saying no to our impulses (even the ones that are not inherently sinful) puts us in control of our appetites rather than vice versa. It deposes our lust and permits truth, virtue, and integrity to rule our minds instead.

We belong to an undisciplined society. The world we live in has enthroned the notion of personal rights and made restraint seem evil. But even in such a culture, those who rise to leadership will usually be the ones who practice a measure of self-control.

How can leaders develop self-discipline in an undisciplined world? With the hectic pace of modern life and the layers of complexity that have been added to life by so many modern “conveniences,” is it possible to discipline oneself as a leader?

I'm convinced that it is, and I have found several practical suggestions to be personally helpful to develop self-discipline. When I'm asked to speak to leaders about leadership and self-discipline, I often give this list: