



## PART 3

# AN APPROVED WORKMAN: LEADERSHIP HELD TO A BIBLICAL STANDARD

## Chapter Ten

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# 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**

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:



## *Get Organized*

Start where you are. Clean your room. Put your desk in order. Put away things that are out of place, and throw away things that are useless. Make everything in your environment neat.

Make a list of priorities and put them in order. Then schedule your time so that everything gets done. Schedule the hardest and most undesirable tasks first, so that you can do them when you have the most energy. Break complex tasks into smaller steps, and schedule each phase of the process.

Personal organizers are very helpful, whether you prefer the high-tech style of computer-based personal information managers or the low-tech variety of a simple notebook or calendar. Use whatever suits your preference (even if it's just random scraps of paper), but keep it in one location and follow your plan.

If you don't have control of your time, you won't have control of any aspect of your life. And if you don't operate deliberately, on the schedule you have planned for yourself, your life will be ruled by crises and problem people. You cannot be an effective leader if you are always at the mercy of things out of your own control.

## *Use Time Wisely*

Having made a plan for how you will use your time, follow it. Don't procrastinate. Work hard. Don't waste time. Stay busy. Be punctual. (Being late for appointments is a thoughtless waste of *other* people's time as well as your own.) Don't allow unnecessary interruptions or diversions to deflect you from your real priorities.

It is the epitome of foolishness to waste time. Paul wrote,

**Ephesians 5:15-16 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,  
<sup>16</sup> making the most of your time, because the days are evil."

I have never met anyone who could habitually waste time and yet remain organized.

Of course, you need leisure time too. Jesus Himself recognized that rest is essential ([Mark 6:31](#)).

**Mark 6:31 (NASB)**

<sup>31</sup> "And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." (For there were many *people* coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)"

But be organized and disciplined in that part of your life as well.



## *Find Ways to Be Edified Rather Than Merely Entertained*

When you have time for rest and relaxation, do things that feed your soul rather than your carnal appetites. Listen to tapes of good preaching. Find music that uplifts and ennobles, rather than filling your mind with vanity and foolishness. Read a good book. Develop a hobby that has real value. Have an edifying conversation with someone you love.

This is a key component of true godliness: Give your private life to God. Devote yourself *especially* in your leisure time to the task of cultivating humility, repentance, holiness, and the fear of God.

## *Pay Attention to Small Things*

If you're going to stay disciplined, you need to develop a habit of putting things where they belong. When you see a picture frame that is crooked, straighten it. When you see a weed, pull it. When you see something out of place, no matter how insignificant it may seem, put it away.

Small things are often important. Jesus told a parable in which the master commended a servant who was "faithful in a very little" (Luke 19:17).

**Luke 19:17 (NASB)**

**<sup>17</sup> "And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.'"**

A lack of discipline in small matters often causes failure in the big things too. As the familiar nursery rhyme reminds us, whole kingdoms have been lost for the want of a horseshoe nail. Conversely, in my experience, those who are faithful in small things are the same people who are disciplined in more important matters too.

## *Accept Extra Responsibility*

When you see something that needs to be done, volunteer. Meet others' needs whenever you can. Show yourself to be an industrious leader. Look for ways to use your gifts and resources for the good of others. This will help you focus your energies. It will also help you cultivate a servant's heart.

You have probably heard the old adage "If you want something done, ask someone who is busy." That's because hardworking people are the ones who get things done. Lethargy breeds a disorganized and undisciplined life, and learning to embrace extra responsibility is a good cure for lethargy.



## *Once You Start Something, Finish It*

If you have a habit of starting projects you never finish, that is a sure sign of an undisciplined life. This goes back to the issue of planning. Good organization includes counting the cost. Jesus said it is a reproach to start something and not be able to finish ([Luke 14:28–32](#)).

### **Luke 14:28-32 (NASB)**

**<sup>28</sup> “For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?”**

**<sup>29</sup> “Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him,**

**<sup>30</sup> saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’”**

**<sup>31</sup> “Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand *men* to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand?”**

**<sup>32</sup> “Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.”**

Why multiply projects when you haven’t finished what you started before? Such a habit will quickly undermine people’s confidence in you as a leader.