

# DISCIPLINE FOR GODLINESS

## DISCIPLINE OF MIND-SOUL

### INTENTIONAL PROGRAMMING

#### *Christian Literature*

Along with reading the Word, we ought to be reading good books. The brilliant Jewish radio talk show host Dennis Prager, a man who makes sure he is well-informed, said in a recent interview in *The Door*:

“One thing I noticed about Evangelicals is that they do not read. They do not read the Bible, they do not read the great Christian thinkers, they have never heard of Aquinas. If they’re Presbyterian, they’ve never read the founders of Presbyterianism. I do not understand that. As a Jew, that’s confusing to me. The commandment of study is so deep in Judaism that we immerse ourselves in study. God gave us a brain, aren’t we to use it in His service? When I walk into an Evangelical Christian’s home and see a total of 30 books, most of them best-sellers, I do not understand. I have bookcases of Christian books, and I am a Jew. Why do I have more Christian books than 98 percent of the Christians in America? That is so bizarre to me.”

**It is bizarre** — especially when a commitment to Christ is a commitment to believe in things that go far beyond the surface of life. Sadly, the bulk of the non-reading Christian public are men, who buy only 25 percent of all Christian books.

Men, to deny ourselves the wealth of the accumulated saints of the centuries is to consciously embrace spiritual anorexia. Great Christian writing will magnify, dramatize, and illuminate life-giving wonders for us. Others have walked the paths we so want to tread. They have chronicled the pitfalls and posted warnings along the way. They have also given us descriptions of spiritual delights which will draw us onward and upward.

In preparation for speaking and writing about the subject of the mind, I (Dennis Prager) mailed a questionnaire to thirty Christian leaders, including such people as Charles Colson, James Dobson, Carl F. H. Henry, J. I. Packer, Warren Wiersbe, and Calvin Miller. I received twenty-six responses.

The survey asked four questions:

- 1) What are the five books, secular or sacred, which have influenced you the most?
- 2) Of the spiritual/sacred books which have influenced you, which is your favorite?
- 3) What is your favorite novel?
- 4) What is your favorite biography?

**Bible Study: Discipline for Godliness**

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**Pastor Eddie Idefonso**

The devotional/theological books mentioned most were **C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity***, **Oswald Chambers's *My Utmost for His Highest***, **John Calvin's *Institutes***, **A. W. Tozer's *The Pursuit of God***, and **Thomas a Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ***.

The most frequently mentioned biographies were **Mr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor's *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*** and **Elisabeth Elliot's *Shadow of the Almighty***.

The favorite novels were **Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*** and **Fyodor Dostoyevski's *The Brothers Karamazov*** (which was, for example, the favorite of Charles Colson, Wayne Martindale, Harold Myra, J. I. Packer, and Eugene Peterson). These titles make a superb list from which to select if you have not done some serious Christian reading.

Also, today many books are available on CD (great for listening as you drive to work or when traveling, etc.). For example, our public library carries tapes of such great books as ***Pride and Prejudice*** by **Jane Austen**, ***Pilgrim's Progress*** by **John Bunyan**, ***Brothers Karamazov*** by **Fyodor Dostoyevski**, the ***Diary of Anne Frank***, ***Scarlet Letter*** by **Nathaniel Hawthorne**, **Homer's *Odyssey***, ***Screwtape Letters*** by **C. S. Lewis**, ***Lord of the Rings*** by **Tolkien**, ***War and Peace*** by **Leo Tolstoy**, and many others.

Men, you need to fill your mind with good stuff. I am not suggesting a manic spree (George Will, for example, is able to read two hefty books a week). But many of you would do well to commit to reading two or three good books this next year.

What amazing instruments reside in the three or four pounds between our ears, instruments with greater capacity than a thousand busy New York City switch boards. The mind is greater than all the computers put together, for it can possess the *mind of Christ* and think God's thoughts after Him, wear His heart, and do His works. What an eternal tragedy it is, then, to have this mind and have it redeemed, yet not have a Christian mind.

We must protect our minds. We must refuse to allow our culture's media to write our program. We must say no to the wastelands that invade our homes.

**And we must make a conscious effort to submit to the Divine Programmer through reading His Word.** There has got to be some holy sweat. "... train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (**1 Timothy 4:7-8**). Prayerfully commit yourself to reading and studying God's Word.

Further, read the great works of those who have gone before you.  
Prayerfully make your commitments now.