

## Training Resources

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Talk 1. Applying the gospel to all of life—Mike Bullmore

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Talk 2. Feeding on God cultivating a fruitful life in the word.

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Mike Bullmore is part of Sovereign Grace Ministries. He is the senior pastor of one of the Sovereign Grace churches. These two talks were given at the New Attitude Conference in 2006.

In the first talk Mike explains how the truth of the gospel ought to impact our lives. Christ claims ever inch of our lives and it is the truth of His gospel that is to shape ever part of us. Our desires and our thoughts and our behaviour is to lived out under the gospel. In the second talk Mike talks about what God intends to get done in the life of the believer by His Word. He says "if you are not regularly and seriously coming under God's word you are in trouble. You are not heading for trouble. You are in trouble. " We need God's word to nurture us.

any change in our lives, and follow-through requires perseverance.

A verse of Scripture I often use in the face of failure with my own sins is Proverbs 24:16: "For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, but the wicked stumble in time of calamity." The person who is disciplining himself toward holiness falls many times, but he doesn't quit. After each failure he gets up and continues the struggle. Not so with the unrighteous. He stumbles in his sin and gives up. He has no power to overcome because he does not have the Spirit of God at work in him. If we would succeed in our pursuit of holiness we must persevere in spite of failure.

Notes:

1. Jay E. Adams, *Godliness through Discipline*, page 3.
2. Godliness is closely akin to holiness in Scripture. Strong's Concordance lists holiness as a synonym for godliness. Vine says godliness is "that piety which is characterised by a Godward attitude, and does that which is well pleasing to Him" (*Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, page 162).
3. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, page 325.
4. Adams, *Godliness through Discipline*, page 14.
5. The Navigators have materials to help you develop a Bible reading plan, start systematic Bible study, and begin a Scripture memory program.
6. An excellent practical book on the art of meditation is *Meditation – The Bible Tells You How* by Jim Downing.
7. Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson, *Jonathan Edwards*, page 143.

## Upcoming Events

Coming up this term are two great social events that you can invite your mates to so that they can get to know your friends from the church. This may be the first step for them in coming to hear the good news.



### Weekend Walkers

Manley to Northhead  
and on to Shelly beach

Saturday 8 March 2008  
Meet at the Church

Weekend Walkers are people in our church who plan a number of day walks around the Sydney area exploring interesting places by foot.



### Blokes and Spokes

7:45 am Saturday  
15 March 2008

Meet at the Church

Blokes and Spokes is an opportunity for guys to get together to cycle around Sydney. The rides that are chosen are usually 20 to 30 km rides and are fairly easy. With plenty of breaks along the way planned the ride provides plenty of opportunity for good conversations.

February 2008

## TRAIN Team Sheet

### Train Checklist

#### Bible Input (15)

Read the set passage and briefly discuss the questions provided.

#### Debrief (15)

Give each member the opportunity to discuss how his personal strategy for growing in godliness is progressing.

#### Pray together (15)

Give people time to unload any concerns or struggles they have and spend time praying for one another.

#### Resources (15)

Feedback any helpful insights that came from last month's training resources. Share any other helpful resources and announce and discuss upcoming events. Arrange next meeting.

### A Training Plan

The apostle Paul didn't run aimlessly. He was deliberate and intentional in what he did. We likewise need to be deliberate and intentional in growing in godliness. It would be good for each of us to adopt a simple training plan in order to ensure that we are doing all that we can do to train ourselves to be godly. Without a plan we are in great danger of drifting along aimlessly. The following six-point plan is a suggestion. You might like to adopt it or come up with your own. What is important is that we

The Bible likens life to a race. It's not like running the 100 metres. It is not a sprint. It is more like running a marathon. We are told to run the race of our lives in such a way as to get the prize. "Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown of laurel that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever." (1 Corinthians 9:24-25)

## Bible Input: 1 Cor 9:24-27

### Run the race

At the 2000 Olympics in front of a home crowd, with 80,000 people waiting for her to enter the stadium Australian walker, Jane Saville was disqualified from the 20 km race moments before the end. Everyone thought that it was going to be gold for Australia but then the official with her little red disc appeared and Jane was disqualified. Nobody wants to run a race only to be disqualified at the end. This is especially true of the believer. Paul warns the believers in Corinth to be careful not to fall. He warns them to flee from idolatry. In the reading today we are looking at what the apostle did to ensure that he wasn't disqualified.

24Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.  
25Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. 27But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. (ESV)

1. What do you think the prize is that the apostle is referring to (cf/ James 1:12)?

2. What does the apostle do to avoid disqualification?

Paul didn't run aimlessly. He lived his life with purpose and direction. What goals ought to control the way we live our lives?

What areas of life do men need to be exercising discipline and self control?

have a strategy for growing in godliness and that we stick at it.

1. Talk personally with God and read His word daily.
2. Gather family members for regularly prayer and Bible study.
3. An active involvement in my church.
4. Always honour the Lord Jesus at work
5. Share Christ with others
6. Encourage my brothers to run the race

Whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Phil 4:8

## The Place of Personal Discipline

HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH  
GODLESS MYTHS AND OLD  
WIVES' TALES; RATHER TRAIN  
YOURSELF TO BE GODLY.

1 Timothy 4:7

It is possible to establish convictions regarding a life of holiness, and even make a definite commitment to that end, yet fail to achieve the goal. Life is strewn with broken resolutions. We may determine by God's grace to stop a particular sinful habit – entertaining lustful thoughts, criticising our Christian brother, or whatever. But alas, only too frequently we find we don't succeed. We do not achieve that progress in holiness we so intensely desire.

Jay Adams puts his finger on the problem when he says, "You may have sought and tried to obtain *instant* godliness. There is no such thing.... We want somebody to give us three easy steps to godliness, and we'll take them next Friday and be godly. The trouble is, godliness doesn't come that way."<sup>1</sup>

Adams goes on to show that the way we are to obtain godliness is through Christian discipline.<sup>2</sup> But the concept of discipline is suspect in our society today. It appears counter to our emphasis on freedom in Christ, and often smacks of legalism and harshness.

Yet Paul says we are to train or discipline ourselves to be godly (1 Timothy 4:7). The figure of speech he uses comes from the physical training that Greek athletes went through. Paul also said, "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training" (1 Corinthians 9:25). He said this was an attitude of his life, and one that each Christian should have (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). If an athlete disciplines himself to obtain a temporal prize, he said, how much more should we Christians discipline ourselves to obtain a crown that lasts forever.

As these verses indicate, discipline is structured training. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* lists as one definition of discipline, "training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character."<sup>3</sup> This is what we must do if we pursue holiness: We must correct, mold, and train our moral character.

Discipline toward holiness begins with the Word of God. Paul said, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). The last item he mentions is *training* or *discipline* in doing righteousness. This is what the Scriptures will do for us if we use them. Jay

Adams says, "It is by willing, prayerful and persistent obedience to the requirements of the Scriptures that godly patterns are developed and come to be a part of us."<sup>4</sup>

We read in Scripture, "You were taught...to put off your old self...to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24). Where are we taught these things? Only in the Word of God. Discipline toward holiness begins then with the Scriptures – with a disciplined plan for regular intake of the Scriptures and a disciplined plan for applying them to our lives.

Here our cooperation with the Holy Spirit is very clear. The Holy Spirit has already done a good part of His work by providing us with the Scriptures to discipline us. And as we learn them, He will faithfully bring them to our minds as we need them to face temptations. As we seek to apply His Word to daily situations, he will work in us to strengthen us. But we must respond to what the Holy Spirit has already done if we are to expect Him to do more.

So we see that we must discipline our lives for a regular healthy diet of the Word of God. We need a planned time each day for reading or studying the Bible. Every Christian who makes progress in holiness is a person who has disciplined his life so that he spends regular time in the Bible. There is simply no other way.

Satan will always battle us at this point. He will try to persuade us that we're too sleepy in the morning, too busy during the day, and too tired at night. It seems there is never a suitable time for the Word of God. This means we must discipline ourselves to provide this time in our daily schedules. I have found the early morning hour before breakfast to be the most profitable time for me to read the Bible and pray over areas of concern and need. That is also the only time of day when I can be consistent in my principal means of exercise – jogging. To do all this before breakfast requires that I get up at 5 o'clock. And since I need about seven hours of sleep each night,

that means I must be in bed – lights out – by 10pm. That is hard to do. It can only be done by disciplining my evening hours.

Whether before breakfast or after, morning or evening, the point is we must all arrange our schedules to provide for this daily intake of the Word of God.

A disciplined intake of the Word of God not only involves a planned *time*; it also involves a planned *method*. Usually we think of methods of intake as falling into four categories – *hearing* the Word taught by our pastors and teachers (Jeremiah 3:15), *reading* the Bible ourselves

(Deuteronomy 17:19), *studying* the Scriptures intently (Proverbs 2:1-5), and *memorising* key passages (Psalm 119:11). All of these methods are needed for a balanced intake of the Word. Pastors are gifted by God and trained to teach the "whole counsel of God". Reading the Scripture gives us the overall perspective of divine truth, while study of a passage or topic enables us to dig more deeply into a particular truth. Memorisation helps us to retain important truths so we can apply them in our lives.

But if we are to pursue holiness with discipline, we must do more than hear, read, study, or memorise Scripture. We must meditate on it. The practice of meditation on the Word of God – simply thinking about it and its application to life – is a practice we develop through discipline. Most of us think we don't have time for this, but there are blocks of minutes during the day when we can meditate if we develop the habit.

I am something of a "bug" for the daily news and I enjoy listening to the news on the radio as I drive to and from work or elsewhere. One day I was challenged by the example of a friend

to use that time to meditate on Scripture verses. Now I am surprised at how many minutes I can use to think about Scripture passages and their application to my life. You may not have the same opportunity I have to meditate as you drive, but if you prayerfully think about it, you will probably find other opportunities in your schedule.<sup>5</sup>

The objective of our meditation is application – obedience to the Scriptures. This too requires discipline. Obeying the Scriptures usually requires discipline. Obeying the Scriptures usually requires

change in our patterns of life. Because we are sinful by nature, we have developed sinful patterns, which we call habits. Discipline is required to break any habit. If a boy has developed the wrong style of swinging a baseball bat, he cannot just decide to change instantly. He has developed a certain habit, and much discipline – much correction and training – is required to break the bad habit and develop a new one.

In the same way, our patterns of disobedience to God have been developed over a number of years and are not broken easily or without discipline. Discipline does not mean gritting your teeth and saying, "I'll not do that anymore." Rather, discipline means structured, planned training. Just as you need a plan for regular Bible reading or study, so you need a plan for applying the Word to your life.

As you read or study the Scriptures and meditate on them during the day, ask yourself these three questions:

1. What does this passage teach concerning God's will for a holy life?
2. How does my life measure up to that Scripture; specifically where and how do I fall short? (Be specific; don't generalise).
3. What definite steps of action do I need to take to obey?

The most important part of this process is the specific application of the Scripture to specific life situations. We are prone to vagueness at this point because commitment to specific actions makes us uncomfortable. But we must avoid general commitments to obedience and instead aim for specific obedience in specific instances. We deceive our souls when we grow in knowledge of the truth without specifically responding to it (James 1:22). This may lead to spiritual pride (1 Corinthians 8:1).

You can readily see that this structured training in holiness is a lifelong process. So a necessary ingredient of discipline is *perseverance*.

Any training – physical, mental, or spiritual – is characterised at first by failure. We fail more often than we succeed. But if we persevere, we gradually see progress till we are succeeding more often than failing. This is true as we seek to put to death particular sins. At first it seems we are making no progress, so we become discouraged and think, *What's the use! I can never overcome that sin*. That is exactly what Satan wants us to think.

It is at this point that we must exercise perseverance. We keep wanting instant success, but holiness doesn't come that way. Our sinful habits are not broken overnight. Follow-through is required to make

### Food for Thought

This article is an abridged chapter from the book, "The Pursuit of Holiness" Jerry Bridges wrote this book in 1978 and it has since then encouraged many to live a life worthy of the gospel. Read the article before your next TRAIN and reflect on the following questions:

What excuses do guys sometimes come up with for not training themselves to be godly?

What things can get in the way of feeding daily on the word? What strategy would you need to put in place to be more regular at reading God's word?

Why isn't it enough to just to read the Word? What more do we need to be doing?