

I. Introduction¹

A. What is the hardest thing you do? Life is full of challenges. I am not sure what kind of challenges you face. In my world I work hard to try to keep up. I suspect you can relate. My issue is I'm pulled in a variety of directions. There is the classic "work versus home" tension. And then at work I get pulled between time to think, pray, study and reflect (the things people expect a pastor to do), with the need to attend mtgs, answer emails, recruit volunteers, draft agendas, meet budgets and all of that. You have your own set of competing demands – your own ever-expanding to-do lists. What is the hardest part of your life? I know what my number one challenge is, across all categories the biggest challenge I face by a wide margin is.... managing myself.

1. I'm inclined to go pretty easy on me. After all, I think I'm a pretty nice guy and very reasonable. My excuses (let's call them arguments) make great sense to me. I see why I should take a break or take a nap or put something off.

2. I'm not suggesting that leading others is easy. But I find it easier than leading myself. And that is what we are going to focus on today – under the banner of discipline.

II. Discipline is a term in desperate need of good PR firm. Because, it doesn't poll as well as it should. Most people do not like discipline, but we should. Let me start with 3 quick points.

A. First, I am not talking about punishment.

1. This is not about giving your four year old a time-out for throwing a tantrum at Costco, or grounding your 16 year old for missing curfew.

2. Instead, I mean "the willingness to do things that we do not want to do in order to become who we want to be." The willingness to delay gratification – to suffer now – in order to enjoy things later.²

B. Secondly, discipline is a good thing.

¹ Tom Landry, the legendary coach for the Dallas Cowboys, once said that his job as a football coach was to get men "to do what they didn't want to do in order to become who they'd always wanted to be." That sounds a bit like something King Solomon might have said 3,000 years ago, because discipline is a big theme in the counsel he dispensed. Mike is going to be focusing on that today as we continue with *Deep: From Surface to Substance*.// As you may know, this series is based principally out of Proverbs. And today's focus is on discipline – which pops up throughout the Book of Proverbs. But Mike asked that I read something else. This text looks back to last week and the relationship between grace and discipline – which is something we need to be very clear about. Got loves us and accepts us on the basis of his great grace. We are transformed as Christ-followers through His grace and our efforts. In the second chapter of his letter to Titus, Paul makes this point: "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."

² M. Scott Peck defines delayed gratification as, "nothing more than arranging the pains and the pleasures of life in such a way as to ensure and enhance the season of pleasure by facing pain first and getting it over with." (Hybels, *Making Life Work*, IVP, 1998), p. 72.

1. Some have quite a negative view of discipline, but the God who loves you and wants the best for you encourages you to be disciplined. We see this throughout the Bible, not just in Proverbs:

- a) In 2 Tim. Paul announces that we are to be noted for our love and ‘self-discipline’”
- b) In Philippians 3 – in a passage in which Paul sounds like a track coach trying to amp up his team before a big race, he says, “press on towards the goal for the prize of the higher calling of God in Christ Jesus.”
- c) And there is lots more – including the fact that while half of the parables celebrate grace, the other half celebrate something we might easily call discipline.

2. I’m stressing the upsides of discipline because the Bible does and because many people have a problem with it. They do not like the word. They see it as painful – which doesn’t jive with their view that God’s mission is to reward those who believe in him with an easy life. But that isn’t God’s mission. The Bible never says that. Quite the opposite: God is looking at the big picture and He is more concerned with our character than our comfort.³

C. And besides – point three – net-net, self-discipline is the easy path. It’s the least expensive option.

1. As you read through Proverbs you keep hearing about disciplined people who are flourishing (life is easy for them) and undisciplined people who are struggling. And then you get to the New Testament you hear Jesus make some of the same points. In Matthew 11 Jesus says:

- a) “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

2. Jesus is talking to people who are being crushed by life and by a religious system they can’t master. Some of you feel that way about the Christian faith. “It’s pushing you down. You can’t do it. There are too many rules.” Well, if you feel that way you are doing it wrong. When we follow the path Jesus puts in front of us things get easier – that is His promise. But, hear this, not at first. The Biblical writers contend that doing the right thing – while hard – leads to freedom.

³ J.I. Packer, one of the most important theologians of the 20th century, wrote the following about expecting the Christian life to be easy and comfortable: Maintaining a certain level of comfort is the agenda of an enormous amount of American evangelicalism but...It needs to be said loud and clear that in the kingdom of God there "ain't" no comfort zone and never will be. Being in the kingdom of God has to do with self-denial and cross-bearing and living a life in which instability and problems of one sort or another is par for the course. You read the New Testament and that's actually what you've got...This isn't comfort-zone stuff. It's the negation of comfort-zone stuff. Cited from: Skye Jethani, “Not the Easy Life,” *God with Us*, 26 July, 2015.

3. Now, part of the reason there is so much confusion about this is because the biblical writers are referring to the ‘freedom of,’ while today most people think about the ‘freedom from.’

a) ‘Freedom from’ discipline means you sleep in, skip class and don’t work out. You are free to spend money willy-nilly because you do not have a budget.

b) The ‘freedom of’ discipline means you get up on time, attend class and work out and consequently have lots of options – you are free to excel and be in shape. The person who is free from the constraints of a budget is care free right up to the point that they run out of money and wrack up debt – then they are a slave.⁴ The person who submits to a budget has the freedom that accompanies fiscal stability. One is easy for a moment but then hard over the long haul. The other is hard for a while and then easy for the long haul.⁵

4. Solomon – the regal sage of the ancient world – celebrates discipline because it leads to the ‘freedom of.’ And part of the way he sells his approach to his young son (the one he was initially writing for) is to show the contrast between the person who gets up early, works hard, keeps their word – and the one who doesn’t.

5. So we have a lot of contrast between the wise, disciplined person who is thriving and the lazy, foolish sluggard who is not.

D. Before we dive in, let me note that the Bible isn’t alone in saying all of this. At the moment there are a lot of self-help and business books about discipline – all extolling the benefits of “doing the right thing at the right time and in the right way,” of developing the right habits.

⁴ Proverbs 22:7: The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender.

⁵ Please understand the relationship between freedom and discipline. It is so often misunderstood. When people think freedom today they think “freedom from” rather than the “freedom of.” They want a freedom from obligation. They do not want to have to do things. And many who think this way believe that those who get ahead are lucky or that it’s somehow easier for other people to push themselves. There are some who are waiting until they feel like it to push themselves. Those who take this path seldom see it for what it is – a ticket to slavery. But that is what Proverbs is saying. The biblical view of freedom is very different. The freedom of joy, the freedom of realizing what I was designed to be – this freedom comes through hard work and sacrifice. Musicians are free to express themselves in wonderful music only after they have practiced for thousands of hours. Artists are free to capture what is up here on a canvass only if they have developed their skill over years of hard work. Athletes are free to perform at the highest level only if they have worked, sweated, drilled and sacrificed.⁵ Only after they have invested their 10,000 hours. We are free to be all we can be when we are disciplined. I’m not happy about this. I wish the world were not broken. I wish lots of things were easier than they are. But they are not, and as a result this is a big dividing line. And it’s a big theme in Proverbs.

1. It's big right now because this is where our lives are breaking down. To be fair, there are times when it's not clear what we should do. The problem isn't discipline it's a lack of wisdom. But let's be honest. Many of us know how to raise our game – how to be a better spouse or a better parent; we know how to lose weight, save money or grow spiritually. We just don't do it. We lack the resolve, the grit, the moral muscle.⁶
2. This is on center stage today because we have so many options – and that means that the discipline to do the right thing is more critical.
3. It's common today to complain about how busy we are. But that is our choice. The truth is, we've never had as much free time as we do now. Think about it, we outsource just about everything. I'm pretty sure no one here built their own house free trees they cut down; no one here is growing all of their own food and making all of their clothes. Few here probably change the oil on their own car. And on top of that we have machines to do the laundry and the dishes.
4. One-hundred and fifty years ago you didn't struggle to prioritize all of the competing options. Your goal was to have enough food to eat and a warm place to call home. And you were pretty motivated to keep after these things. For many around the world little has changed. If you're a Syrian refugee trekking across Europe, you're not praying for the discipline to do the right thing (or the wisdom to choose it from your many options). Your goal is to find something to eat and a place to sleep. And that is about all that matters.
5. Discipline is a hot topic today because we have so many options. We need wisdom to sort through them all and the willpower to do the right thing.

III. Let me back up for a moment and set our discussion in context.

- A. In week one I argued: 1) that God wants more of your heart - He wants you to lean in; 2) but there are obstacles, including the three-ring circus that we call Western culture; therefore, (pt 3) we need to intentionally cultivate our relationship with God – we need to go deep.
- B. Last week we defined wisdom as 'godly-character in action,' a mix of common sense and moral living grounded in long-term thinking and the pursuit of God. That message ended as we looked to the Bible's instructions about how to gain wisdom: think about our death; study The Book; have the right friends and pray.

IV. We now turn to discipline. I have six points

- A. Point one I've already alluded to: We struggle with discipline.

⁶What you do and how the way you do it is incredibly simple. Whether you are willing to do it, that's another matter. Peter Drucker.

1. For most of us, this is the battle line. We often know what to do, but struggle to do it. Most of us have a pretty good idea how to get in shape or save money; how to be a better friend or learn a foreign language. We know how to grow closer to God. But, we fail to execute on the plan. Our best intentions go unrealized because...

B. Point two: We are broken.

1. It amazes me how often people fight this point. It seems so obvious to me.⁷ Scripture celebrates our value. It announces that we are greatly loved and highly valued – you bear the image of God! But it also contends that we are deeply fallen: we are selfish, self-centered and self-indulgent. Because of a sin-infection we often do not want to do the right thing – which makes our situation worse.

2. Solomon brings this to light by profiling those who are particularly weak or lazy. It depends on your translation, but he calls those who show little discipline *sluggards* and *sloths*. Neither are positive terms. I do not know of any high school teams whose mascot is the sluggards. The sluggard – who is a subset under the heading of a fool – then comes under consistent attack.

a) In Proverbs 6:6 Solomon tells them to study the ant – an insect with a brain smaller than the tip of a pin – because they can learn something. After all, even the ant knows how to lay aside food for the winter.

b) In Proverbs 18:9 he compares “the one with slack habits” with the person who destroys things.”

c) And in Proverbs 26:14 – which is one of my favorites – he mocks the sluggard, saying. “As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed.” (Think about that next time you are tempted to hit snooze).

3. I could go on but you get the point. There is a bit of this softness in all of us. Our will is weak. But the way forward is discipline, which is point three.

C. Third: Discipline is a multiplier.

1. A lazy person is unlikely to say this. They are more inclined to attribute someone else’s success to luck. But Proverbs celebrates discipline and suggests that it makes a big difference.⁸

⁷ Scripture clearly teaches that we are all broken (sinful, depraved, etc.) and our experience confirms this. G.K. Chesterton once wrote that the doctrine of original sin is the easiest of all the doctrines of Scripture to prove. Evidence of it is all around us. Just read the newspaper or listen to the evening news. Most of all, if we’re honest with ourselves, the most persuasive proof that the human race is hopelessly depraved is inside our own hearts. (Chesterton also noted that if we don’t believe this doctrine, which we have abundant empirical evidence to support, how can we possibly believe the truths of the Bible we’re required to accept by faith?)

⁸ Nothing is more harmful to the service than the neglect of discipline; for that discipline, more than numbers, gives one army superiority over another. George Washington

2. A few years ago for a Men's Fraternity talk on friendships, I developed an equation that goes like this: $\Delta = [(G + AS - W)D \times T \times (F + M)] HS$.

- a) Δ (the difference between the starting point and ending point);
- b) G = gifts, natural abilities or starting talent;
- c) AS = Acquired Skill;
- d) W = Wounds;
- e) D = Discipline (you might also have an E for effort)
- f) T = Time;
- g) F = Friends and M = Mentors.
- h) HS = Holy Spirit

3. My point then was that: 1) we are where we are because of a handful of factors, some of which we control and some of which we do not; 2) if you want to change your trajectory then you have to change one of the variables you actually control. We do not control where we start or how naturally gifted we are, but we do control a few of them – one of those is the amount of effort or discipline we bring to the equation.

4. When I shared this it was to argue about how important friends are. We'll be coming to that in a couple weeks.

5. I also used it to note how flawed it is to compare with others, because we do not start in the same place. And those of us born on third base should not confuse being on third with hitting a triple.

6. I'll come back to this when it comes to friends. Let me move on

D. Fourth: Discipline requires that you pay in advance. The pain comes early.

1. Last week I noted that there are two ways to gain depth. I'd been asked if there was some way to grow deep besides leaning into God - heading down the path I am unpacking. And I said, "Sure, suffer." We can go through a trial.

2. Well the truth is, the path I'm advocating also includes suffering – but this is suffering that we choose. As opposed to cancer, or the death of a loved one, or some of the other ways we might have suffering forced on us, self-discipline involves leaning into suffering we might otherwise avoid.⁹

⁹ Skye Jethani writes, "The transformation of our desires happens like all spiritual transformation—by following in the steps of Jesus. In a word, I believe the answer is suffering. This kind of pain comes in two varieties—there is suffering we don't choose, which is often referred to in the New Testament as a "trial," and there is suffering we do choose, which we call a 'discipline.'"

3. Please hear me. Because I think there are two mistakes people make here. Some believe you can move forward without pain. They keep chasing easy. They believe those who say: you can get in shape without working out; you can lose weight without eating less; you can buy a house with no money down, learn a foreign language in your sleep, etc., etc. There are always people offering short cuts and selling “easy.”¹⁰ But it doesn’t work this way. Easy is a lie. You can get better, but it will cost you. The way forward takes time, effort and self-denial.¹¹

a) In I Timothy 4, Paul writes to Timothy, his young understudy, to offer him advice about how to live and how to lead. He says, “Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.” If you want to believe that there is a Nigerian Widow who needs you to help her launder a few million dollars from her late husband’s oil wealth, go ahead. But those plans almost never work. And that is not what we are promised. What we are told here is to train ourselves to be godly. The word train means discipline. The Greek word is *gymnaze*, which gives us the word gymnasium, which implies working out.

(1) Let’s watch this video. (Nick Roach) What I appreciate about this is his discussion about technique. And how you have to do the right things at the right time. And it may be hard.¹²

4. The first misunderstanding is to think there is an easy way to go deep. But the second misunderstanding is that what starts hard stays hard. But that is not the case. It gets easier and life gets better. The hard work pays off as the right actions become habits.¹³ This is hinted at in Hebrews 12:11:

a) No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

b) And the truth is, it’s even easier than that, because the discipline itself gets easier.

E. Five: Habits Help

1. Pt 1: We struggle because we lack discipline; 2) We lack discipline because we are broken; 3) Discipline is a multiplier; 4) Discipline requires that we pay in advance. Number Five: Habits Help

¹⁰ You can...have six pack abs in just 45 seconds a day; You can expand your vocabulary while you sleep; You can learn a foreign language in 2 weeks; And there is a Nigerian widow whose late husband was oil minister who wants to send you four million dollars if you help her launder the other ten.

¹¹ The path has been previously described using words like spiritual discipline or the mortification of the flesh.

¹² The truth is, discipline is painful: Growth = change; change = loss; loss = pain, so growth = pain

¹³ In John 15 we are told that God prunes trees. If a tree could talk they would likely note that being pruned hurts. But a pruned tree flourishes. We have to do what we have to do in order to get to do what we want to do.

2. Last week I noted that whatever we do – whatever we think, do and say – shapes us in for better or worse. I also said, “Let’s not overthink this. Whatever we do today is easier to do tomorrow – whether that is good or bad.” The way I remember this is a pithy little poem that unpacks 2 Cor. 10:5, a passage where the Apostle Paul tells us to “hold every thought captive to Christ.” Well it applies here:

a) Sew a thought reap an action; sew that action, reap a habit; sew that habit and reap a character; sew that character and reap a lifestyle; sew that lifestyle and reap a destiny. If you want to control your destiny, control your lifestyle. If you want to control your lifestyle, control your character; if you want to control your character, control your habits; and if you want to control your habits, control your thoughts.

3. If you pull this thing apart you see that habits are right in the middle. They are the pivot point. We need to give serious thought to our habits.

F. Six: The right habits will carry you forward.¹⁴

1. What habits are those? They are the ones Jesus modeled: getting up early to spend time with God; Scripture memory, service, fasting.

2. Let me call a time out here to complain – as I often do – that I do not have enough time to say everything I think is important. I spent a lot of time reading about discipline this summer. And I learned a lot which I cannot wedge into this sermon (some of which you can find in the notes).

a) I want to be sure you understand that discipline itself is not the goal, it’s just a path forward.¹⁵

b) I want to be sure you realize that even with a steel will we cannot do this on our own. We need friends.

c) I also want to be sure you understand that we need to be careful what we spend our will on. We do not want to waste it.

(1) I used to think our will was like a muscle and that if we exercised it, it would grow stronger like faith. I realized this summer that I didn’t know of any passage that promised that. And I also ran across research that suggested the opposite.¹⁶ The studies suggest that our will is like a muscle in that, if we exhaust it doing pushups we have nothing left when it comes to the punch press.

¹⁴ A quote by Warren Buffet that has gotten a fair bit of play is: Winners make a habit of doing things losers do not want to do.

¹⁵ In his first letter to Timothy, Paul noted that physical discipline is of some value. But not ultimate. Our highest goal is not to be in great shape, it’s to become people who bring God joy, and that comes through spiritual growth. He goes on to say, “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.” See also, 1 Cor. 9:25

¹⁶ Back in 1996, Roy Baumister and colleagues at Case Western Reserve University, examined the effect of a tempting food challenge designed to deplete participants’ willpower through the awful power of an unfulfilled

d) There are other things I'd like to talk about, such as the importance of getting some wins,¹⁷ because they help us renew our energy level. Or the value of deciding in advance what you are going to do so you don't have to think about things.^{18 19} You'll find some of this in the notes.

3. I want to focus what time I have left on saying, we need to make a habit out of the things Jesus made a habit out of. Conservatives talk about Jesus as Savior and Lord – for good reason. Liberals often emphasize Jesus as a model. This also has merit. Without losing any sense of Jesus as God and Savior, we need to realize that he models how life works. And as you study his life you see:

- a) He would get up early to slip away and spend time with God.
- b) He had memorized large sections of the Bible
- c) He would spend time alone, or alone with God.

promise of chocolate! In the first part of the trial, Baumeister kept the 67 study participants in a room that smelled of freshly baked chocolate cookies and then teased them further by showing them the actual treats alongside other chocolate-flavored confections. While some did get to indulge their sweet tooth, the subjects in the experimental condition, whose resolves were being tested, were asked to eat radishes instead. And they weren't happy about it. As the scientists noted in their *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* paper two years later many of the radish-eaters "exhibit[ed] clear interest in the chocolates, to the point of looking longingly at the chocolate display and in a few cases even picking up the cookies to sniff at them." After the food bait-and-switch, Baumeister's team gave the participants a second, supposedly unrelated exercise, a persistence-testing puzzle. The effect of the manipulation was immediate and undeniable. Those who ate radishes made far fewer attempts and devoted less than half the time solving the puzzle compared to the chocolate-eating participants and a control group that only joined this latter phase of the study. In other words, those who had to resist the sweets and force themselves to eat pungent vegetables could no longer find the will to fully engage in another torturous task. They were already too tired. In the psychology world, the key finding of this seemingly silly study was a breakthrough: self-control is a general strength that's used across different sorts of tasks -- and it could be depleted. This proved that self-regulation is not a skill to be mastered or a rote function that can be performed with little consequence. It's like using a muscle: After exercising it, it loses its strength, gets fatigued, and becomes ineffectual, at least in the short-term. Perhaps more importantly, this research would go on to serve as the foundation for at least 1,282 other studies involving everything from consumer to criminal behavior. (Hans Villarica, "The Chocolate-and-Radish Experiment That Birthed the Modern Conception of Willpower." *Atlantic Monthly*, April 9, 2012).

¹⁷ High goals can lead to high achievement, which can lead to high self-esteem, which can lead the loop to keep progressing. Conversely, a lack of discipline in one area tends to erode discipline in other areas.

¹⁸ In a HBR article, Clayton Christensen, a professor at Harvard Business School, says that a decision he made while he was playing basketball in college has made so much of life easier. Christensen was playing for Oxford while he was a Rhodes Scholar. Basketball is not huge over there, but it is one of only three varsity sports - along with Rugby and Field Hockey (for guys). And Christensen and his teammates made it to the finals for the country – the equivalent of the final four in the NCAA tournament here. And then he realized that the finals were on a Sunday and he had made a commitment at the age of 16 to never play sports on Sunday. He wrestled with this privately for a while. It was, after all, the finals. And it was only this once. And his teammates needed him. (He was the starting center). But he felt like he couldn't bend even this once, because he sensed – and he's right – that it's easier to keep your principles 100 percent of the time than it is to do so 98% of the time. Christensen says he has never regretted that decision, because that act of discipline has helped him stay strong in so many other moments. And he has noted that more than a few of his Harvard and Oxford classmates – the best of the best – have ended up in jail.

¹⁹ One of the easiest examples of this is the discipline of a sleep schedule. Not being disciplined to go to bed on time means we get tired. And when we get tired we get weak - we lose energy, resolve and hope. The discipline of eating right, exercising and getting to bed on time all affect my character.

- d) He would fast.
- e) He would devote time to prayer before big events.

4. Those who try to act like Jesus (those who try to love their enemies, not be selfish or notice the hurting) without also doing these other things – things that shape us internally – find that it doesn't work. But there are lots of people who have found success in gaining depth as they have cultivated some of the practices that were common to Jesus.

5. And here's the deal, these things are hard for a while and then they get easier. And once they get easier they do not take much effort. Some of you know this from other areas of life, such as brushing your teeth. Believe it or not that used to be a big deal. You had to be reminded and you pitted out the bathroom. Now you do not think about it.

6. I'm that way with running. It's not hard for me to run. I'm not very fast anymore. But it's a well-worn path.

7. The same kind of thing is true for getting up early, dropping down to my knees and starting the day with prayer.

8. There are some practices that make a difference

- a) I have talked about Worship, Connect, Grow, Serve and Share a lot. Under the grow category I would list: Bible reading and prayer are at the top of the list.

V. OK, I've made six points. Let me wrap this up with one more

A. As I have noted a few times – most of the talking points here are from the Old Testament. That leaves out a few things we just can't leave out. In this case, the Holy Spirit. In Galatians 5 the Apostle Paul talks about the fruit of the Spirit. It reads:

1. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

B. Those commenting on this passage often note:

1. That it's fruit (singular) not plural. This is sort of a package deal.

2. And that fruit is what a fruit tree grows naturally. You never see an apple tree breaking out in a sweat trying to bear the fruit.

C. I want to note that we need to ask. We need to pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And that this is part of the ongoing conversation with God.

D. I do not mean to undermine any of the things I have said. This has been a talk on discipline. Make no mistake, effort and sacrifice are expected and required. You will not become who you want to become if you do not actively lean into God. But the path is not to force yourself to love or be patient. That doesn't work. We need to follow the example of Jesus – and part of that is to yield our life more and more to the Spirit of God.

VI. Wrap up

- A. Next week is insight – and among other things I will challenge you to make room to hear God by doing a tech fast.
- B. You can sign up today for workshop on spending time daily with God or for the extended time of prayer.
- C. Give some thought to your habits. Which ones serve you well? Which might you need to develop? Where do you need to take ground: health, money, your visual diet. Then, don't think you can change by simply deciding – instead, seek God. Memorize some Scripture. Let me suggest Hebrews 12:1-11
- D. Set some goals and share them with your small group and figure out how you are going to encourage one another to keep after it.

VII. Quotes

- A. Both successful people and unsuccessful people dislike doing the hard work necessary to be successful.
- B. For a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths. The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline and because of his great folly he is led astray. Proverbs 5:21-23
- C. We have to do what we have to do in order to get to do what we want to do.
- D. The first and best victory is to conquer self. Plato
- E. Talent without discipline is like an octopus on roller skates. There's plenty of movement, but you never know if it's going to be forward, backward or sideways. H. Jackson Brown, Jr.
- F. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act but a habit. Aristotle.
- G. Mental toughness is many things and rather difficult to explain. Its qualities are sacrifice and self-denial. Also, most importantly, it is combined with a perfectly disciplined will that refuses to give in. It's a state of mind – you could call it character in action. Vince Lombardi
- H. There are no short cuts to anyplace worth going. Beverly Sills
- I. Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anybody else expects of you. Never excuse yourself. Never pity yourself. Be a hard master to yourself – and be lenient to everybody else. Henry Ward Beecher
- J. People do not lack strength, they lack will. Victor Hugo
- K. Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid. (Prov. 12:1)
- L. You can map out a fight plan or a life plan. But when the action starts, you're down to your reflexes. That's where your road work shows. If you cheated on that in the dark of the morning, you're getting found out now under the bright lights. Joe Fraizer
- M. The battles that count aren't the ones for gold medals. The struggles within yourself - the invisible, inevitable battles inside all of us - that's where it's at. Jesse Owens, American track and field athlete and Olympic gold medal winner

- N. "If you really want to do something, you'll find a way; if you don't, you'll find an excuse." Unknown Author
- O. We have to do what we have to do in order to get to do what we want to do.
- P. Champions do not become champions in the ring – they are merely recognized there.
- Q. If we do not discipline ourselves, the world will do it for us. William Feather
- R. When all is said and done, a lot more is said than done.
- S. Pick your rut carefully, you'll be in it for the next 20 miles.