

Be fearless in bringing about conviction, weeping and repentance. People need to feel these things, not just know them. People should be left under conviction until they break through. When we do this we do the greatest service to a person anyone can do. We preach the Word of God causing sinners to become saints, like a surgeon, removing sin and implanting Christ Himself into a human life. Hallelujah!

THE  
LEADER  
IS  
ORGANISED

**O**rganisation is **simple and basic, but extremely essential** for success. Life comes at us like a thundering herd of wild animals. All the things that **must** be done. All the things we **want** to do. All the things others **require** of us. All the things our circumstances thrust upon us. All these **demands** require that we **order our lives** so we can deal successfully with them all.

Organisation can be basically reduced to,

**TIME AND PLACE**

There is a time for everything.

**Ecc 3:1 "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven..."**

This is called appropriateness. We work when we're meant to. We rest when we're meant to. We plan our time so that we **spend** it on our highest pursuits and the things we value most.

Management is all about systems. Systems are "habits" for want of a better term. When I was a child, we were required to change the sheets of our beds and our pyjamas every Thursday morning. That was the day sheets and pyjamas were washed in our house. These were habits everyone had to acquire. This and other habits, formed systems and the household operated smoothly. We knew the system and we worked with the system. This gave us the security and clarity of knowing what was required and when.

This anonymous poem says it well:

*You may know me.*

*I'm your constant companion.*

*I'm your greatest helper, I'm your heaviest burden.*

*I will push you onward or drag you down to failure.*

*I am at your command.*

*Half the tasks you do might as well be turned over to me.*

*I'm able to do them quickly and I'm able to do them the same every time if that's what you want.*

*I'm easily managed, all you've got to do is be firm with me.*

*Show me exactly how you want it done, after a few lessons I'll do it automatically.*

*I am the servant of all great men and women, of course, servant of the failures as well.*

*I've made all the great men who have ever been great.*

*And, I've made all the failures, too.*

*But I work with all the precision of a marvellous computer, with the intelligence of a human being.*

*You may run me for profit or you may run me to ruin, it makes no difference to me.*

*Take me. Be firm with me and I'll put the world at your feet.*

*Be easy with me and I will destroy you.*

*Who am I?*

**I'M HABIT!**

Management must have basic systems. Systems synchronise time and place between people.

If "**place**" is not understood we waste time. The hammer "**lives**" in a certain **place**. When we've used it, we return it to its **place**. We file things; not to put them away, but so we can **retrieve** them when we want them. We waste time looking for the hammer when it's not in its **place**. This is the same with the keys, or our wallet, or our sunglasses, or whatever.

What is time? Our time is our life!

### **When we waste time we waste our life!**

When we're looking for the hammer we could be doing something with it. When we're looking for the keys, time

is passing that shouldn't be. People live frustrated and unproductive lives because they are unorganised. Things don't have "place" in their life.

### **If you're always early, you'll never be late!**

Don't waste other people's time. Being punctual is essential if we want respect from others. Everyone feels his or her time is precious. And it is! Tardiness is a serious character flaw. It is not a light issue, even though perpetually tardy people think it is. If ten people are on time and the eleventh is 30 minutes late, things can't happen until that person arrives. The result is that five hours of other people's lives have been wasted because of someone's tardiness. Be early, you'll always impress. Be late, you'll never impress those who are worth impressing. Lateness doesn't create trust. Promptness demonstrates as well as earns respect. People realise they can rely on you.

David Yonggi Cho leads the largest church in the world, yet makes sure he's always early for appointments. I've heard him say he tries to be fifteen minutes early for any appointment. If anyone has an excuse for lateness he does. This reveals one of the reasons why the man has developed enough trust for a team and church that size to grow up around him.

**Organised  
people are  
able to  
move fast  
through  
life.**

The worst thing about disorganised people is that they fail to see how frustrating they are to themselves, and to others. They laugh a tittering giggle, saying things like, 'Oh, I'm so disorganised aren't I? Ha ha ha, he he he he.' Everyone rolls their eyes, nods their head and wonder what planet these people are from.

Watching an unorganised person make breakfast is a hair pulling event. They put cereal in the plate, pour the milk in and then eat it. Then they think, 'Now I'll have some toast.' They get bread out of the bin and then get the toaster out and watch it cook. Sproing! Up it pops and so they then look for the butter. No butter! Off to the shop to get some butter. Oops! No money in the wallet. Off to the ATM. Get the money - back to the shop - get the butter, then home again. Oops! No honey either! Back to the shop, but where did I put my keys? Finally get the honey and we're home. Put the toast back in to heat it up. Now, we're ready. Eat the toast then think, some coffee would be nice. So on goes the jug and they watch it boil. Finally around dinner time, they've managed to finish breakfast. Only a fool would ask this kind of person to even think about posting a letter for them. It would be a drama worthy of Zefferelli! Sequence events so that time is maximised.

Don Argus, Managing Director of the National Australia Bank at the time of writing, believes that time management is critical to effective leadership. He takes time every morning to prioritize the daily demands, to dictate his own pace<sup>97</sup>.

Organised people are able to move fast through life. They have motion in their lives. They are able to keep a hundred things going all at once. The sheer energy and dynamism of all the things going on creates an updraught of energy and excitement for everyone around them.

Being organised is being methodical. This can mean solving problems by the process of elimination. Tackle a task one step at a time. Don't try to do everything at once. Do first things first. When we systemise our lives we accomplish the task faster and more completely than in any other way. I have systems for almost every area of my life. Most of my life is actually quite predictable ninety per cent of the time. If I keep myself working within a system I find I am able to achieve at a far higher level.

Creative people may squirm at this thought, in the belief that a spontaneous life is the only way to let true creativity rise. This isn't true though. I read of Ken Done, one of Australia's leading artists, going to work on his paintings at 9 a.m. each day, working through till 5 p.m. or 6 p.m. then finishing.

I am involved in writing songs, preparing sermons and painting paintings, all highly creative processes. In fact I was going to be an artist had I not entered the ministry. I find I can organise the execution of creative ideas so that my world remains organised to keep accomplishing things at a higher level. Creative surges come spontaneously, but even these times can be organised by

making sure I've arranged the setting for creativity to flow easily.

Even though we're talking about little things like making breakfast and posting letters, these apparently simple systems, when applied to the way we approach the work of our organisations, will translate into success or failure. The winning or losing of business, the enlargement or shrinking of a church or the gain or loss of millions of dollars. It means success or failure.

## PLANS

Prov 16:9 (TLB) "We should make plans-- counting on God to direct us."

Donald Trump, the New York property developer who has amassed, lost and then recovered vast fortunes in deals involving billions of dollars says, *'Wait patiently for right opportunities to get what you want and then move quickly. Be extremely efficient. Fight all the way for costs and excellence to be maintained.'*<sup>98</sup>

People who live life by an organised game plan are always in a better position to take advantage of opportunities when they arise. If we're not in position on the field when the ball is being passed we're not going to catch it. If we're not in position the chance to score passes us by. This means we are keeping up with the game. We are on the field. We're a player. We are at the events. We are in contact and keeping connected. We organise communication, and plan meetings. We know that winning never just "happens".

Every project we ever embark upon must have three areas in place:

- A/ Authorities
- B/ Resources
- C/ Design

In the early days of starting a church I began with very naive ideas about how to get into a building to house the church...

I'm thinking it's simply a matter of finding the right facility, organising the money and away we go. However, I find the local civic authorities have different ideas. We find a building, but they won't approve us using it as a church until we have made a huge amount of changes to it. These threaten to cost enormous sums of money. The changes need to meet our needs, satisfy Council requirements and fit into a budget.

I have been involved in numerous building projects since that time. Now we always address these matters first whenever the overseeing committee or Board meets. We report on our progress with **authorities, designs and resources.**

These three factors are not limited to just building projects either. They apply to everything we are attempting to do.

Do we have the necessary authority to do what we are planning? Has God said, *"Do it!"* Have those we're accountable to agreed to the plans? Are other authorities on side? Do we have agreement from others in our lives that are important to the project being successful; family, friends ...?

Do our plans meet the needs we have? There's little point in designing a building, hiring a person, or planning a function that doesn't meet the need. **Define the need**

**before you design the answer.** Some people are busy answering questions nobody is asking or meeting needs that people don't have. Obviously a clear understanding of need must precede design. We must have it clear in our minds what we are trying to accomplish.

### **Form follows function.**

Resources are such things as money, time, people and circumstances. Do we have the resources to succeed? Do we have the money? Will the bank lend the money? Do we have the people? Do we have the time? Do we have the skills, experience, and knowledge available to accomplish it? If not, then we should make sure these are in place before we start so we are not embarrassed and the work of God is not maligned.

**Luke 14:28-30 "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it; lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' "**

Lack of preparation is a sure way to fail. Preparation is always the hard part of success. People have come to believe that winning is just a matter of luck. Australians spend \$8.4 billion a year gambling just on horse racing and another \$3.5 billion gambling on lotteries.<sup>99</sup> Americans spend \$8 million every day on gambling.

The highest levels of success are not a matter of luck. Success is the result of hard work, being organised, great people skills, and the willingness to continue learning, confidence and committing all our works into the hands of God.

## WINNING

Many Christians still imagine that success is something that falls out of the sky. We imagine that trucks will back up to our houses and pour out all the furniture we need. We think its coming in the mail - our big lucky break from God, of course. No! Winning does not come like that. **Winning comes because we guarantee it will come** by working hard, by right preparation, and by making wise decisions. God blesses our efforts.

Vince Lombardi, born in New York City, one of the most successful coaches in American football history, led the Green Bay Packers to five National Football League (NFL) championship victories in the 1960's, including two Super Bowls, says, *'Winning is a habit. Unfortunately, so is losing.'*

1 Samuel 17 reveals at least nine principles of winning from the timeless story of David & Goliath.

**1. Fearlessness.** Fear paralyses action and thought. The Israelites are frozen with fear. Not a blow has been delivered. For six weeks no one has engaged in battle. The bellowing taunts of the freakish looking giant hold an entire army ransom to terror. Problems always bellow failure in our face. Yet, filled with the Holy Spirit and boldness from heaven we can achieve the same as David. Our aim is to paralyse fear before it paralyses us.

**2. Faithfulness.** David would never have had the opportunity had he not been trustworthy. His father

entrusts him with the job of taking supplies to his brothers. He is also organised and trustworthy enough to arrange for his other responsibilities to be cared for. He makes sure his flock of sheep are in good hands. He is also to bring back news regarding his brothers. Jesse, David's father, knows David can be relied on to bring back a full report.

**3. Focus.** Ignore the jealous dream killers, the doubters. David's older brothers condemn him as mischievous. When they hear his bold response to the giant's challenge they accuse him of meddling where he is uninvited. David has a vision that he can actually defeat the hulk. If we know we can achieve the vision we tell it to the people that matter and those who can believe with us. David is a brilliant vision caster. He convinces Saul, the King of Israel, that he can deliver the entire nation from impending bondage to the Philistines; even though he's never fought in a national battle, or been trained in the art of war. Saul actually entrusts the future of the entire nation and his own position as King into the hands of the brave young warrior. David doesn't look like a soldier, neither is he dressed like one. Yet his argument holds enough conviction to compel the King to hand the fate of his country into a battle between this shepherd lad and the Philistine champion.

**4. Experience.** You've proven you can overcome in equally as threatening, even if not as significant, circumstances. The testimony of the young shepherd is possibly the most compelling communication. David has already proven his valour by defeating a lion and a bear.

He knows he can do it. This is where conviction comes from. We know it can be done. This highlights again our need for personal, private victory.

**5. Be yourself.** Don't be afraid to think outside the box. There are normal ways to fight a war and to fight a giant. David doesn't fit another man's armour, methods or strategies. Saul offers the young man the King's own armour. It's too big and David is unsure in it. But he does know his own ways. He attempts to do as his King requests, but declines after it is obviously unsuitable.

**David's faith is in God and in being himself.**

He has already figured out how the giant is to be beaten. The sling and the stone will do the job. He's fully confident he will find his mark with the first missile. No one has considered this as a strategy. We don't let the devil dictate the terms of the battle. We fight the enemy on our terms, on our turf. This is where our victory is.

One of the unique qualities of our fellowship of churches and ministers is the great diversity that exists amongst us. Hamish and Dianne Divett oversee CCCI movement in New Zealand. Their church is wonderfully unique and they have held to a fresh approach to church worship and culture, and their church is packed on Sundays. Amongst other things they have developed an inspiring counselling technique, through which many people are discovering release and new freedom. Yet they have also encountered criticism, simply because it employs new language and methods that are unfamiliar to most.

Basically it helps people find God in their life using questions like, 'Where is God for you?' 'What does that feel like?' This is a unique expression of who they are in Christ and as they have remained true to that expression they have discovered the blessing of God on their ministry.

**6. Prophecy.** David speaks to the giant and prophesies what, when and how he will defeat the giant and the entire Philistine army. Instead of speaking about our problems we need to speak to them. Even though the enemy has issued threats and proclamations of victory of his own they are futile against the promises of God. The Word of God prevails every time over the feeble threats of the defeated enemy.

**7. Do it for God.** David's motivation is jealousy for the honour of Jehovah. He is incensed at the mocking of the giant. David's aim is to bring God the glory. If we are living for God and seeking first the Kingdom of God, we will find all the resources of Heaven are at our disposal. The choices we make in life need to be for God, not for ourselves. The battles we fight need to be battles for God and for His glory.

**Let's not find ourselves fighting battles God is not involved in.**

Fight the fight for His glory. We will discover strategies that yield victory every time.



**8. Don't hesitate.** David runs to the giant. Once committed he is unhesitant. He knows he's going to win, and he knows exactly how. Starting is always half way to winning. The start needs always to be bold and decisive. Great leaders make their decisions and then commit fully to making them happen.

**9. Complete the task.** David doesn't only do the job half measure. He completes it and severs the head of the Philistine champion. Finish the work. The stone sinks into the head of the giant, but only renders the champion unconscious. David continues running to the giant. With Goliath's own sword, David removes the great head of the monster.

## **T**IME

Shakespeare's Richard laments in Richard III:  
*'I wasted time and now doth time waste me.'*<sup>100</sup>

I'm currently 45 years old. If I live to around 80 years old that gives me another 35 years - that's 12,740 days. One third of that time I'll be sleeping. At least another third I'll be doing things ancillary to the main purposes of my life. That leaves me with about 4,000 days to give myself to my priorities. It is seriously important that I don't waste this time I have. Time is the gift of God. More precious than gold.

Both Paul and King David understood the high value of time. These verses tell us it is a wise person who arranges life to maximise time.

**Psa 90:12** "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

**Eph 5:17** "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

Troubled days subtract precious time from our lives. We are distracted from dealing with the things that really matter. Therefore we must take advantage of every moment in our lives.

**Plan time.** Probably the most common complaint people have is that they have no time. The trouble with that complaint is that everyone on Earth has exactly the same amount of time. Some are accomplishing enormous things with theirs, others are doing nothing at all. The problem is not to do with "having" time, it is to do with "making" time and "organising" the time we have. Making time is simple. We simply plan it. We write it down in a diary. When the time arrives to do something, we do it. Otherwise, this priceless resource slips quietly through our fingers until we reach the end of our lives and it's all gone. When other things try to crowd it out, we've pre-organised higher priority items. We have a previous appointment. I'm constantly amazed at the relative unimportance of almost everything. There are only a few things that are really important. Most things that scream out that they can't wait actually can. Bill Cosby has said, *'I don't know what the secret to success is, but I do know that trying to keep everyone happy is the secret to failure.'*<sup>101</sup> Running around after everyone's demands is not going to give us the success we're looking for. We prioritize our time according to the first things in our life.

We also make time by not spending time on futile things. I don't have the time to read the newspapers every day. Some may have, but I don't, and frankly I don't need to. If I was a politician I might need to, but I'm not, so reading the Word has a higher priority. I read the Saturday morning paper, watch the six o'clock news headlines about three times in the week, and that keeps me up to date with all I need. I don't have time to read novels, watch the endless array of movies around, or be

going to every little social event we're invited to. There are more important things I'm living for than endless small talk and late nights doing nothing. I'm not trying to find things to do. I'm organising all the things I'm not going to do, so I can do those things I must do. And to do them as well as I can.

**Make lists.** Organised people live by lists. List the important things you are to do today, this week, this year and this life; then do the most important things first.

People without a list find life overwhelming. When we're shopping, we make a list of the things we need. We mark them off as we get each item on the list. When we're doing a job with many different tasks involved, we have a list and mark off each task as it's completed. We have a list of today's goals, this year's goals, and our whole of life goals.

Create **to do** lists, **goal** lists, **problem** lists, **fault** lists, **sin** lists, so you can view what needs to be dealt with and then deal with it. If an army approaches you as a wall they will be difficult to defeat, but if you line the members of an army up in single file you'll find you can knock 'em over one by one.

Plan from the end backwards. Start from the finish. We always ask ourselves, *'What am I attempting to achieve?'* *'What do I want to happen?'* We find the answers to these questions then we devise a plan to bring us to that point. This is **result orientation**. It keeps you from just doing the job or playing the game, without being

concerned for the results. It matters little how hard or long you work, or how talented you are at the game. Did you get the results?

**DID YOU WIN THE GAME?**

**DID YOU ACHIEVE WHAT YOU SET OUT TO DO?**

A good example of bad execution of this principle is in the story of the city workmen who pull up their truck outside the house of a retired gentleman. One of the workers jumps out and digs a hole. Then the other

workman gets out and fills it in. The old-timer is sitting on his porch watching this with fascination. The men drive a little further. Again one jumps out and digs another hole. The other then gets out again and fills it in. They drive a little further and proceed to do the same. The old-timer's fascination turns to frustration when he remembers that he pays rates to employ these guys. He walks down to the men and

Anything worthwhile takes longer, demands a higher price, and encounters stronger opposition than you thought it would.

asks, 'What the heck are you doing digging a hole, then filling it up again?' They reply, 'the guy who plants the trees is sick today!'

This is what happens when people are completely unconcerned with the end result, and are just there to do

their job. People may be able to kick a ball amazingly around a field. Who cares? Do they score goals?

I don't approach Sundays with an attitude of *'What message shall I preach?'* but rather with the attitude, *'What do we want to achieve in our church at this time?'* **That desired end result determines what and how I preach.** Then within the particular message I ask myself, *'What am I trying to achieve here? What one thing am I attempting to say? What do I want the people to have or do at the end of this time?'*

Then I follow the plan. A plan always has exciting parts to it, especially at the beginning; then comes the hard slog. Do the hard bits first. Anything worthwhile takes longer, demands a higher price, and encounters stronger opposition than you thought it would. Cover the hard yards so you can enjoy the easy parts without thinking you've yet to tackle the difficult areas.

The primary school I attended as a child supplied a sit-down lunch every day. Mostly the food was pretty terrible. The vegetables were really bad. Stringy carrot, wooden parsnips and soggy cabbage. But we had to eat it all. So I made myself eat the vegetables first, then get down to the meat. Get the hard parts, the distasteful parts over and done with first, then the end is far more enjoyable. Leave the good bits till the end. It's a reward. It's a part of the inspiration that you need to keep going with the tough stuff, because you know the good part is still yet to come. If the good part is already all over, we're not that inspired to keep going.

Be thorough in the planning stages. Don't be impatient to get to the finish. The old carpenters' rule is "*measure twice, cut once.*" Do it properly the first time and you'll not have to do it a second or a third... Cover all the bases in the plan, and the execution is child's play.

### **The primary reason things fail is inadequate planning.**

To **prepare** takes extra time, but to **repair** afterwards takes much more. The results of not doing a thing properly have disastrous effects. In two or three of the battles lost in the American Civil War, the result is said to have been due to bad gunpowder which was supplied by "shoddy" contractors to the army.

The Boy Scouts' motto still applies, "**Be prepared.**" It's amazing how many people need to borrow things from others simply because they didn't get themselves ready for the event. In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus addresses the problem of not getting ready in relation to the Second Coming. Obviously that's a fairly large event to make sure we're ready for. On less of a grand scale though, each day we should be prepared for whatever arises. The prepared person doesn't bother with the basics all the time; they have a pen in their pocket, they have a pad to write on, money in their wallet, sunglasses, a tank full of petrol, a map in the car and a jacket for the weather. It goes on and on. The person who doesn't think ahead is always at a supreme disadvantage to anyone else who does. Whether it's leadership, church

ministry, sales or business negotiations, the prepared person is always in front.

*'I'm convinced that achieving success for an individual or company requires no more and no less than paying serious attention to 'first things'. Most people aren't willing to put first things first.'*<sup>102</sup>

**Do things when you're asked, not when they are due.** This way you're always ahead of yourself and completely prepared. When the assignment is due in four weeks time, do it straight away. Don't wait four weeks then do it the night before it's due. This lifestyle creates high stress. Always get the work done before you play.

### **Work before play - always.**

Once the work is completed then play. Your "play" is guilt and stress free.

The only thing preventing people from being organised, if they have implemented these habits in their lives; is **discipline**. Put your teeth together and make yourself **stick with the plan**. Stick with your commitments. Stick with it until the list is clear. Don't follow your emotions; **live by principle, plans, priorities and purpose**.

Time has three dimensions, the **past**, the **present** and the **future**. We must have each under control, and in that order.

If the **past** is not properly dealt with, it destabilises our **present**, and destroys our future.

If our **present** isn't being dealt with properly our **future** has no platform for take off.

With finances for example, if bills from the past aren't paid, we are unable to invest in the future. If we are not paying the rent on our house or on our office in the present, we've got nowhere to live, or to do business from in the future. Having a vision for the future is great, but some of us need to get a vision for our past in order to fix it up. Others of us need a vision for our present, to arrange our life so it works in the here and now. Sometimes we can be caught using a vision for the future as an escape from the consequences of the past and the responsibilities of the present. As we deal with the past and the present we're able to move forward into the future.

I've watched people leave their job, trying to start up a company, even a church. They believe it's all going to work so well that they can leave what they're doing and have instant success. The best way to venture out into a new thing is to keep a steady paying job, so the rent, food and other basics are covered. This means working harder. It may mean working after hours, into the night. This is the price of getting out in front. Nothing great comes without a price.

**Prov 24:27 "Prepare your outside work,  
Make it fit for yourself in the field; and  
afterward build your house."**

## PLACE

Being organised means understanding that everything has a place. Right down to the car keys. We rob ourselves, our employees and our businesses of days and weeks every year because we can't find things as simple as car keys. While we're looking for keys or whatever it is, we could be doing something far more productive. All it takes is having a place for everything to live and making sure to keep things where they live. We put things back when we've used them. When we walk out of the house in the morning, we have a pen in our pocket, our wallet with us, our diary in hand, all we need for the day. This is a ritual every morning, so that we're not always asking someone for his or her pen, borrowing someone's sunglasses or wondering when we're meant to be seeing someone? It means we don't waste time or money getting booked for not having our licence on us. Or borrowing money because we haven't got our wallet. This kind of thing is frustrating for everybody around us. The consequences of living with an unfocused mind are that we're frustrated with ourselves, huffing and puffing as we look for keys, yelling at our kids because we're upset and generally feeling overwhelmed. Approaching life this way, we live way below our potential simply because we did not get organised.

*"Marginless is being thirty minutes late to the doctor's office because you were twenty minutes late getting out of the hairdressers, because you were ten minutes late dropping the*

*children off at school because the car ran out of gas two blocks from the gas station - and you forgot your purse."*

*"Margin on the other hand is having breath left at the top of the staircase, money left at the end of the month, and sanity left at the end of adolescence."<sup>103</sup>*

A big reason people fail to get organised is laziness. We are all lazy in some area of our life. We need to identify those areas. We then go to work to overcome them. We make ourselves do those things we don't want to. We make ourselves put the tools back when we are finished with them. We don't wait until tomorrow or next week. We do it now. A lazy man doesn't even complete what he began, or take advantage of great opportunities.

**Prov 12:27 "The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting, but diligence is man's precious possession."**

People judge our integrity by our level of organisation. If we reply quickly to a request, people are impressed. If we fail to reply or are slow at it, we're considered sloppy and unreliable. If we're late for an appointment, the same conclusions are reached. People interpret lateness as a character flaw or that you simply don't care. You may think you're just disorganised, but those you're dealing with will see it as a problem of integrity.

## DISCIPLINE

Whatever dreams we have, they will never be realized without discipline. The world lies at the feet of the disciplined person. A person's life lies waste at the feet of indolence. Self-denial is the foundation of discipline. This is basic to the call of a Christian.

**Luke 9:23 "Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.' "**

Oscar Wilde, the notably talented Irish-born writer most famous for the comedy; "The Importance of Being Earnest," lived a debauched lifestyle which eventually landed him in prison where he spent the latter years of his life. Inside gaol he penned these words;

*"The gods have given me almost everything, but I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths to search of a new sensation. What paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion. I grew careless of the lies of other people. I took pleasure where it pleased me, and passed on. And I forgot that every little action unmakes character. And that therefore, what one has done in the secret chamber, one has some day to cry aloud from the house top. I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and I did not know it. I*

*allowed pleasure to dominate me, and I ended in horrible disgrace."*<sup>104</sup>

A poem he wrote while in prison reveals his deep remorse,

And the wild regrets and the bloody sweats,  
None knew so well as I,  
For he who lives more lives than one,  
More deaths than one must die.<sup>105</sup>

Discipline endures hardness, endures pain and pays the price. Discipline keeps us in the harness when we don't want to stay there any longer. Discipline stops us from watching something on the box we don't need to but just want to. We go do the work instead. Discipline keeps us in the producer zone, rather than the consumer zone. We're creating not consuming. We're doing, not talking. We're carrying, not being carried.

Discipline is sticking to the plan. A preacher I heard many years ago, Hal Oxley, an ex army man, spoke of this matter in various ways. He said that the art of self discipline had enabled him to tell himself when he was going to sleep; and to sleep he would go! He spoke of the infantrymen who needed to cross barbed wire under gunfire. It took too long to cut the wire and so someone had to lay themselves down on the wire and become a human bridge for the rest of the team. Generally that soldier would die.

Discipline means many things, including the highest of disciplines as a disciple of Christ, when we are called to lay down our lives for one another. Hal also spoke of the means foot soldiers employed to defeat the charge of the cavalry. If the soldiers would join arms and stand, holding their position, the horses would inevitably balk at the last moment and throw their riders. The discipline required to hold under such a threat is extraordinary. The ancient sailing ship captain would lash himself to the wheel of the vessel in the midst of cyclonic storms and horrendous waves. This is what it means to have discipline in our lives. Staying at the post. Sticking to the job. Doing what has to be done to accomplish the task.