

You Must Choose

by K.P. Yohannan

To live a godly life, we must choose to die to self and live a disciplined life, following Jesus' example and developing habits of respect, responsibility, and self-control.

Scripture: Romans 8:28-29, 1 Corinthians 6:12-13, 1 Corinthians 9:27, 1 Corinthians 11:1, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 2:12, 2 Timothy 2:3, Hebrews 5:8

Topics: "Discipline", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes the necessity of choosing to die to self in order to grow spiritually, arguing that many believers seek instant victories without the commitment to discipline required for true transformation. He highlights that Jesus and the Apostle Paul exemplified a life of self-denial and obedience, urging believers to take responsibility for their spiritual growth rather than attributing their struggles to external forces. Yohannan stresses that godliness requires a deep commitment to a disciplined life, and that choices such as carrying one's cross and embracing hardships are essential for spiritual maturity. He encourages practical disciplines in daily life as foundational to becoming a Christlike individual, ultimately calling for a rejection of a lukewarm, self-serving Christianity.

Transcript

The meeting was over. It was one of the strongest messages I'd ever spoken on dying to self. Maybe that's why I was shocked when a lady came up afterward and asked me to pray for her problems with smoking and having a short temper. In talking to her, I learned she believed these were caused by demons! I told her, "What you need to understand is that you must deal with your flesh--not demons. You cannot cast out your flesh. You must crucify it." Many today seek instant victory and spiritual depth through a crisis experience.

They don't want to pay the price of discipline and putting their old nature to death. Even when seeking God, they still want to be in total control. Jesus came to set us free from our self-centered, lukewarm nature and to change us into His own image (Romans 8:29). Our changed character is much more important than the experience, spiritual gifts or miracles we often seek. Let us take Jesus as our example. Romans 15:3 tells us that "even Christ did not please Himself." He laid aside all His privileges as God and lived on earth as a normal human being.

He totally depended on His Father for everything. Furthermore, the apostle Paul told those around him to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). How did Paul practice this in his life? "Like an athlete

I punish my body, treating it roughly, training it to do what it should, not what it wants to" (1 Corinthians 9:27, TLB). No one becomes godly without a deep commitment to a disciplined life. Dying to self is the door to godliness (Galatians 2:20). And it is a choice we must make.

Jonathan Edwards, the great American preacher and scholar, made 70 resolutions by which he patterned his daily life. He wrote this in his diary: "Resolved, never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can."¹ Jesus asked us to choose to carry the cross. It is not imposed on us. Accepting inconveniences, fasting, praying, giving up our rights, living simply, seeking no honor or praise from men, giving sacrificially, being misunderstood, humbling ourselves and avoiding self-centeredness--these are things we must choose.

Similarly, no one forced Jesus to do anything. He Himself chose the poverty, sleepless nights, hunger, thirst, rejection, loneliness . . . and finally, the cross. He exercised His freedom of choice to discipline everything in His life in order to obey His Father. As Hebrews 5:8 explains, "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." Paul's statement in Philippians 2:12, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," is taboo for many believers.

God is not going to instantly make you holy--you must choose to obey so you can become holy. He will not make you godly without your commitment and work. For example, it took Moses 40 years to become Moses the deliverer. It took Joseph 13 years in prison to become prime minister of Egypt. It took years of discipline and commitment for Daniel to become someone who changed history. It took Jesus 30 years to preach the Sermon on the Mount. Walk away from instant Christianity that offers no cross, hardship or responsibility!

It is false. Without consistent discipline in life, we will remain dependent baby Christians. The following paragraphs make up a list of practical disciplines compiled by a friend of mine to help develop a consistent, godly life.² My prayer and hope is that this list of disciplines will become a blessing to you as it has been for me. Begin with the simple things. A disciple will always seek to avoid making unnecessary work for others. So hang up your clothes. Make your bed promptly and neatly every morning.

Clean up after yourself, and put your shoes in their proper place. Don't despise these small things as irrelevant to becoming spiritual. They are the very essence of it. They indicate that extra touch of foresight, carefulness and thoughtfulness that makes the difference between a spiritual Christian and a carnal, lukewarm one. Show respect to all--even to the poor and the lowly. When speaking or listening to someone, develop the habit of looking at him or her as if no one else mattered to you at that moment.

When in a church meeting, discipline yourself to keep your eyes on the speaker instead of allowing your eyes to wander here and there. To gaze around at others or down at your feet is rude and discourteous, both to the Lord and to the speaker. Tackle difficult tasks promptly. Do first the things that you would rather do last. Sit down right away and do the homework or write the letter (or article) that you have put off for so long. Welcome these difficult tasks. Cultivate a sense of responsibility in doing them faithfully.

Ask yourself these questions: • Can I be depended on to fulfill any task assigned to me? • Am I quick to volunteer when a job needs to be done, or do I find myself slipping quietly away? • Do I accept responsibility for my decisions . . . and for my mistakes as well? • Can I be depended on in money matters? Be punctual for meetings and appointments. The habit of being on time will never be acquired unless you are convinced that courtesy demands it and you plan ahead and allow yourself enough time to get to the appointed place.

Don't allow yourself to waste time in idle daydreaming. Bring every thought into captivity to Christ. Make use of your spare time to read quality books, fellowship with someone or help others. When unexpected events throw your well-laid plans into confusion, don't let stress conquer you--for that is only foolishness. Instead, choose to believe that what seems to be nothing but human blundering is really the gentle steering of God for your very best (Romans 8:28). So give thanks to the Lord for His ordering of your life.

Keep your emotions under control. In conversations with the opposite sex, maintain a courteous reserve; this is because friendship can become affection, and affection can lead to lust--to the shock of both involved. That which began innocently may end disastrously. Don't let Satan make you say, "I couldn't help it." Pluck out the offending eye or cut off the offending hand or foot before it is too late. Your emotions may not immediately obey your will. But your actions must.

In due course, your emotions also will follow the lead of your determined purpose and your decisive stand. Master your moods. Discipline yourself to behave just as well when you "feel bad" as when you "feel good." Discipline yourself to read God's Word and do your work even when you "don't feel like it." Discipline your tongue. Don't blurt out everything that comes to your mind. Frankness is a virtue only when it is coupled with intelligent, loving tact and discretion. Otherwise, it is evil and unnecessary.

Subordinate less important things to the more important ones. Select the things you must do, and do them first. If you "major in the minors" and allow your friends, impulses and conveniences to dictate your priorities, you will end up as a mediocre Christian--useless to God and useless to men. Submit graciously to God-given authority. Such discipline will round off your rough edges and also preserve you from much folly. Control your curiosity. Don't be a busybody in others' matters.

Conquer gluttony. Eating is not a sin, but gluttony is. Paul said, "I will not be brought under the power of any. Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is . . . for the Lord" (1 Corinthians 6:12-13). One should eat heartily and with enjoyment. But we should know what and how much is good for us, and have the self-control to stop when we should. Learn to wait. To grab for something before God's time is to spoil it.

There is a time in God's timetable for all things--in the matter of marriage, for example. Wait for that time, and don't rush ahead. Learn to respect the timetables that are found on life's joys, responsibilities and privileges. We don't help God by opening a rosebud--we only spoil the blossom. Systematic prayer and Bible reading are prime essentials for a disciplined life. The discipline of getting out of bed a few minutes early--at any cost--to spend time for this, every day, will itself bring rich rewards.

Avoid unnecessary luxuries and don't be wasteful in spending money. There are dangers in times of ease and prosperity that can be avoided only by some deliberate acts of self-denial on our part. Choose to miss a meal at times. "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3). Our goal in life is Christlikeness, not a comfortable, self-serving, lukewarm life. Let us have a passion for improving the quality of our Christian life and fulfilling all of God's will. Let us be ready for sacrifice or for service, applying ourselves faithfully at all times to the task at hand. Do all for Jesus' sake!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/kp-yohannan/you-must-choose/>

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