

X'ENT NEWS

**PROVIDING EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP
THROUGH QUALITY CHRISTIAN TRAINING**

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*2 Timothy 2:2
And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.*

Many times when we think about discipline our minds quickly turn to athletes. How often have we watched the Olympics or other sporting events and been caught up in the drama of it all? "The discipline of these men and women" we silently say to ourselves, "is amazing. Just think about all of the hours they have practiced, the pain they have endured, the countless times they must have thought about quitting," we mumble. Admit it, we admire them. We are in awe of how they were able to take a talent and mold it into beauty. And then, undoubtedly, somewhere along the line we think of ourselves in comparison. "Do I have what it takes? Am I that disciplined? Am I as willing to push myself for my Christian convictions as they are for a shiny medal?" Sometimes the answer comes in the form of a passion to get things going again, and sometimes in the form of despair. We know all too well where our lives are really at, know who we really are, and know that we've walked that path all too often before. We hope that this article will again spur you on to get back into the race, or keep on running with endurance, whichever the case may be. Spiritual discipline, like or hate it, is what we are called to. When Jesus said in Luke 9:23,

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me,"

Athletics, Discipline & the Prize



certainly the fact of self-discipline is necessary. We must be willing to daily beat our body and make it our slave (1 Cor. 9:27), in order to be effective as Christians. This is no walk in the park that we have been called to, this is serious business. Take a quick look at some of those serious disciplines that must be a daily part of our lives.

Study & Memorization of the Word

You knew this would be first didn't you? This is an article from XL; would you expect anything else? Ponder these verses for a moment...or a lifetime.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The

precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward."

Psalms 19:7-11

Think about the benefits of studying and memorizing ("in keeping them," vs.11) God's word just from this one passage; revives the soul; is trustworthy; makes wise the simple; gives joy to the heart; giving light to the eyes; they give warning; in keeping the Word there is great reward. I'm sure you would agree, these are attributes we all need in our lives. God make them available to us, if we are willing to be disciplined enough to study God's Word, memorize and obey it.

Prayer

When I was a youth pastor in San Diego I knew an elderly woman who always wore a veil on her head. She was a member of a denomination that looked favorably on women wearing a "head covering" to church and for prayer. However, while the other women, especially the young ones, took their head coverings off the second they walked out the church doors, there was never a time when I did not see her wearing hers. One day I got up enough courage to ask her why. Her response taught me much about prayer. She told me of the verse from 1 Thessalonians 5:17 that says to "pray without ceasing." It was

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very simple, she said. "I always wear a head covering because my Lord has asked me to always be in prayer." Maybe we all need some of those head coverings to remind us also of the necessity to be more consistent in our prayer life.

Discipline over Sin

There are abundant Scriptures which call us to turn away from sin.

Romans 12:9 tells us to "Hate what is evil; cling to what is good."

We are reminded in 1 Thessalonians 5:22 to "Avoid every kind of evil" and in 2 Timothy 2:22 to "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness." Now more than ever before, our young people need godly

role models of adults who are following the Biblical commands of moral purity. Dealing with sin in our lives is no easy task. We must take honest inventories of our public and private lives, assessing them before God's standards of absolute holiness, not by judging ourselves by the people around us. Then

we must be willing to take action against sin. Somebody told me once that "to live a holy life you have to live a holy minute." This takes discipline, moment by moment saying "no" to the flesh and to what we want to do or think. I came across this quote a few weeks ago and now have it hanging on the wall in my office. It serves as a daily reminder to stay on top of my daily discipline of overcoming temptation.

"The better the man, the better the preacher. When he kneels by the bed of the dying or when he mounts the pulpit stairs, then every self denial he has made, every Christian forbearance he has shown, every resistance to sin and temptation, will come back to him to strengthen his arm and give conviction to his voice. Likewise every evasion

of duty, every indulgence of self, every compromise with evil, every unworthy thought, word, or deed, will be there at the head of the pulpit stairs to meet the minister on Sunday morning, to take the light from his eye, the power from his blow, the ring from his voice, and the joy from his heart."

Clarence Macartney,
Preaching without Notes.

Rest

I must admit that this is the discipline that I most often forget about. It's hard to rest: to take time to just stop and listen for a moment, to jump out of the fury of our schedules every once in a while and take some personal and family time.

How often we forget about the 4th commandment, with both its admonition to rest and its admonition to take some personal time before the Lord to worship and to listen.

Admittedly, spiritual disciplines are not the most "warm and fuzzy"

topic to talk about, but in the battle for the souls of young people I can't think of too many more topics that would be of higher priority. Would you prayerfully take time to consider where your own life is in relation to these disciplines, and make the honest changes? Then, while the athletes are training for some trophy that will rust, let us "Press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14)

Brian Murphy ♦



Book Nook

A *Sure Guide to Heaven* Author: Joseph Alleine

For those acquainted with the writings of Charles Spurgeon, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards, look no further than Joseph Alleine for the fountainhead of both style and content. Born in 1634, Alleine's ministry began at age 21 after sitting under the teaching of John Owens at Oxford. His dedication to the work of the Lord was shown by his strict study times, in which he would even turn away friends from his office. "It is better that they [his friends] should wonder at my rudeness than that I should lose my time; for only a few will take notice of the rudeness, but many may feel my loss of time." In the course of his ministry, Alleine was twice imprisoned under Charles II's Act of Uniformity, resulting in poor health which led to his death in 1668 at the age of 34.

As for his message, perhaps the most powerful Puritan look at the nature, necessity, and results of conversion comes from his *A Sure Guide to Heaven*. Focused towards the unconverted, Alleine's writing shows both a passion for the truth of the Word of God and compassion for those who are lost. Dispersed throughout the book are Alleine's prayers for wisdom and for the Spirit of God to penetrate the hearts of those hearing the message. He opens the book with this prayer:

"But, O Lord, how insufficient I am for this work. Alas with what shall I pierce the scales of the Leviathan, or make the heart feel that is hard as the nether millstone? But, O Lord, Thou

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A Sure Guide to Heaven continued...

canst pierce the heart of the sinner. I can only draw the bow at a venture, but do Thou direct the arrow between the joints of the harness. Slay the sin, and save the soul that cast his eyes on these pages.”

Alleine’s structure makes for a great gospel presentation as he first defines the gospel. Then for those thinking that because God is a God of mercy, they will be saved anyway, he explains the necessity of conversion.

“There is a blasphemy in it. To hope that we shall be saved, though continuing unconverted, is to hope that we shall prove God a liar... We must not set God’s attributes at variance. God has resolved to glorify His mercy, but not to the prejudice of His truth, as a presumptuous sinner will find to his everlasting sorrow.”

For the “so called brethren” Alleine attacks their conceit by showing the marks of the unconverted. “When men do not see nor complain nor groan under the pride of their hearts, it is a sign they are stark dead in sin.” As the reader realizes that they cannot escape God’s judgment alone, he offers the means of conversion.

Though strongly evangelical in nature, there surely is much fruit for believers. His section on the marks

of the unconverted (and contrasting explanation of the marks of the true believer) has as much conviction of sin as the works of Owen.

“All of Christ is accepted by the sincere convert. He loves not only the wages but the work of Christ, not only the benefits but the burden of Christ. He takes up the commands of Christ, yes, the cross of Christ. The unsound convert takes Christ by halves. He is all for the salvation of Christ, but he is not for the sanctification... Every man’s vote is for salvation from suffering, but they do not desire to be saved from sinning. They would have their lives saved, but still would have their lusts. Indeed, many divide here again; they would be content to have some of their sins destroyed, but they cannot leave the lap of Delilah, or divorce the beloved Herodias. They cannot be cruel to the right eye or right hand. O be infinitely careful here; your soul depends on it. The sound convert takes a whole Christ, and takes Him for all intents and purposes, without exceptions, without limitations, without reserve.”

Both as a tool for evangelism and as a challenge and encouragement for believers, Joseph Alleine’s *A Sure Guide to Heaven* is highly readable and highly recommended.

Jordan Dees ♦

Youth Ministry Bummer



A Dilemma with Shoelaces

As a lady youth leader for the Junior High and High School it is always fun to go on youth camps and retreats. Playing jokes on the teens is usually fun, but can sometimes be humiliating when things aren’t what they seem. As I walked into the ladies’ restroom during a rest stop, I was glad to see there were only two girls in line (due to the fact that the vans split up and went to different gas stations). As my mind started to play with different ideas for jokes, I glanced under the three stalls and realized that two teens had on sandals and the other wore tennis shoes. I decided to nonchalantly reach under the stall and untie a shoe. As I did so I was very surprised to hear an older voice mutter something. My first instinct was to run and not face the victim of what I thought was a joke on one of the Junior High girls. I turned and was almost out the door when I realized that if I left the restroom, one of the two teens waiting in line would have to take the brunt of my mistake. So as I turned and waited for the victim to come out of the stall, I contemplated what to say. When she finally emerged, I apologized profusely to her, though I was in great danger of bursting out laughing at my huge mistake. Who would have thought that a lady in her sixties would have on brand new Nike tennis shoes? ♦

(If you have a bummer about youth ministry worth publishing, e-mail it to us at bummer@xlministries.org.)



On the move!

- ♦ Jason and Amy Katen have recently accepted a position in the state of Washington.
- ♦ Jeff and Angie Niles have moved to the beautiful town of Parachute, Colorado.

In the works:

- ♦ We are close to final editing on the revisions for *The Youth Ministry Training Manual*. We hope it will be available by the fall of the year.

X *MINISTRIES, INC.* **BIBLE QUIZZING**

The purpose of Bible Quizzing is to use a fun and challenging way to commit large portions of Scripture to memory. Though Bible Quizzing pits one team against another, the goal is not to stomp the other teams. The goal is to encourage other team members and, most importantly, to hide God's Word in our hearts.

We have recently produced a promotional video for Bible Quizzing. It is about 12 minutes in length and is designed to expose people to the benefits of Scripture memorization and how Bible

Quizzing can be useful for this purpose. This could be helpful in promoting quizzing to both teens and adults. If you have an interest in using this video, give us a call or send us an e-mail.

This next year we will be memorizing the book of Titus. It is only 46 verses so this is a good year to get started in Bible Quizzing. We have printed verse cards so that everyone is memorizing from the same version. We use the New American Standard, 1995 edition.

We are in the process of producing an instructional video for Bible



Quizzing. This will be a thorough review of rules and procedures, as well as the utilization of the computer program for quizzing. We hope to have this available in June of this year. It is designed for youth pastors, coaches, quizmasters, and quizzers. If you are interested in this tool, please let us know and we will send it out as soon as it is available.

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