

Articles and Sermons :: Discipleship—Which Means Discipline Written by the Dohnavur Fellowship

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The question is often asked, “How can I best begin at home to prepare for the life of the mission field?” Here are a few practical suggestions:

Effort • It will not be easy. We must go out of our way to acquire this preparedness. We are called to a strict training for a hard fight which will not end till we hear God’s “Well done.”

Difficulties • Let us learn to choose the hardest things, to do what others leave undone. We can begin in the ordinary affairs of home life. The joy of hard climbing and the glory of the impossible should not be mere phrases but experienced facts.

Helpfulness • Make opportunities each day to help others, in inconspicuous ways, not grudgingly but joyfully, though it may mean far less time for yourself. Be kind and thoughtful. Be courteous and good mannered: “Love is never rude, never selfish.”

Sleep • Do not waste time sitting up late talking. King’s business talk is different; but what about the late rising in the morning, the shortened Quiet Time, due to our letting the pleasant conversation of the night before drive on?

Food • “I don’t like this.” Well, learn to like it, unless it actually does physical harm. Be grateful for what God has given. If it is just a case of likes and dislikes, learn to be able to eat things that are not your choice—and enough to keep you fit and strong, not a mere mouthful. The ability to eat unflinchingly may mean much for friendship with peoples of another land whose food is very different from ours.

Clothes • God wants us to be tidy, and certainly not to be conspicuous through slackness. But fashion should not be our master even in the smallest things.

Spending Money • There are many unnecessary gadgets and ornaments that it is very nice to possess, for which we spend money without thinking. All our money is God’s if we are His children. Rich and poor, we should think and pray before we spend, and we should learn to do without. Some, after indulgence in small ways, find it very hard to stop. The people among whom we are to live in the mission field, for the most part never could buy such things or their local equivalent. The unnecessary separates us from those we come to serve. Do not let us live like misers, but pray before we spend.

Tidiness • Some people seem to be born tidy; others think that they never can be. Can we imagine the Lord Jesus when He was on earth with His clothes untidy and all His belongings lying about in disorder? It saves time and is excellent training deliberately to study tidiness.

Comfort • Do not become too wedded to the armchair. The comforts of the modern life may not be found abroad and we must learn to be independent of them—to cut out the things that make us soft. Physical discomfort for its own sake need not be sought, but it must never cause us to turn back. “Be careful of your body, but careless of your life.”

Accuracy • —which is a part of truth. Train the mind in accurate thinking and the lips in accuracy of speech. What of the stories we retell? Do we add to the facts to make people more impressed or more amused? Truth has no place in most non-Christian lands, so when we speak of the necessity of utter truth, our words and ways are watched.

Truth • Let there be no pose. Many Orientals can read us like a book and we cannot deceive them. According to God’s scale of values we are certainly no better than they, so why pretend to be so?

Pride • If you take offence easily, do not come to the mission field thinking that it does not matter. He humbled Himself. He did it deliberately. So let us not care overmuch for the praise or blame of men, even of other Christians. To our Lord we live. If something is misunderstood, learn to go directly to the one concerned. Be frank and humble and straighten it out.

Speech • Don't argue, but learn from God when and what to speak...and realize the value of silence. Never break confidence. Never fear to speak the truth, though it lead to trouble. When God says 'speak', deliver without fear or favor His whole message to individuals or in a meeting.

Humility • If we are wrong let us confess it. It will be humiliating, but it will be the straight thing to do; and no one ever loses standing in the eyes of those he seeks to help by being honest. Be willing to learn from the experience of others, experienced older people, inexperienced younger ones, people of the country, anyone, if only we may do our job more for God's glory. The best way of doing things in the homelands is very often not the best way abroad.

Popularity • It is dangerous, attracting people to oneself. Influence is most often unconscious. God can use the latter if we live near enough to Him, but the former should never be sought. 'He made Himself of no reputation.'

Adaptability • We must learn to be adaptable, be willing to start from the beginning, go to school again to learn the language and the customs and the mind of the people to whom we go. If we do not like having our careful plans altered and something quite different substituted, the sooner we learn to be able to take this joyfully the better.

Patience • Much of this is needed for the study of the language and ways of our new homeland. It is no use trying to hurry the deliberate East. It is seldom any use to give someone 'a piece of our mind'. It is usually not worth giving; and the heat of the tropics does not encourage the spontaneous growth of patience. So it is a lesson to be learned, a gift to be asked from God who freely gives all we need.

Temperament • Even amongst Christians, differences of natural temperament often lead to friction and lack of peace. You may find yourself in a mission station with one other missionary whose tastes and interests and temperament are the very reverse of yours. If you do not get on together, God's name is dishonored before those you hope to win for Christ, for such a feeling of estrangement will soon be known to them. What have you in common? A love for the Lord, a call to His service among those who know Him not. PRAY. Pray frequently together. Pray for others. Worship and adore your Lord together and the petty things that might cause friction will be harmless to annoy.

Thoughts • Think the best of others. Critical thoughts, unclean thoughts, worrying thoughts, envious thoughts, thoughts of self-pity that dwell upon difficulties ahead, or that imagine offence or opposition in others, may be put into our mind by the Evil One. Do not let them stay. If we give place to them and begin to think them over, we shall be led into sin, for even the thought of foolishness is sin. The Holy Companion is within us and knows our thoughts. Let Him control them, and keep us too from the waste of Godtime which we call daydreaming.

Books • What do we read? For refreshment, encouragement, uplifting help of all kinds, there are many books. Let us keep to these. Do we sit up half the night to finish something interesting or exciting? Let us curb the lust to finish and be disciplined in our reading as in other things.

Friendship • Every true friendship should make us more accessible to others and more understanding and helpful. Exclusive friendships are unhealthy.

Marriage • Very many look forward to this as God's good gift. In the mission field there are some kinds of work where married people can do more because they are married. There are equally, a number of situations where single men or single women are far better able to do the work that God has appointed. So let us take nothing for granted and be very, very sure of God's guidance in this most solemn of decisions.

Social Life • Do not become a slave to social life, for it is a snare to many on the mission field. Can you do without the company of people of your own race? Do you crave for the social amenities of the homelands? How much time is wasted in these things! Be independent of them and learn to love the company of the people you have come to serve. They soon understand, and to win their confidence is worth all.

Sense Of Humor • Not only does this at times help us in a difficult situation, but it lightens the necessary stress of our daily work. How can one who does not understand or appreciate the fun of life be the messenger of 'the Gospel of the Happy God'?

Joy • Be glad always. Praise God continually. When you are ill or tired or tempted or at your wit's end, learn the habit of perpetual praise, for it prepares a way whereby God may show us His victory.

The Bible • If you do not believe it to be wholly the Word of God, for Christ's sake (I say reverently), do not come to the mission field. Keen Hindus believe in their holy books, Muslims in the Koran, and they have not much respect for one who brings a Holy Book which is unreliable.

This sums up the spirit of Phil. 2:5-8:

Because we children of Adam want to be great
—HE BECAME SMALL.
Because we are always seeking to climb higher
—HE STEPPED DOWN.
Because we will not stoop
—HE HUMBLLED HIMSELF.
Because we want to rule
—HE CAME TO SERVE.

by Sister Eva of Friedenshort

The Quiet Time • The source of strength for each day. Get through to personal converse with the Lord. Let it not become formal. It must be a conversation with Our Beloved whom we love above all others. Do not merely ask Him for things, but worship and praise Him. The devil will try to let your work cut short God's hour, but do not give in if you want to be of any use to the Lord. It is not the multitude of things accomplished, but the closeness of our walk with Christ that determines whether our building will be of gold, silver, precious stones... or of wood, hay, and stubble.

Prayer • Pray often with your fellow-laborers—with anyone who loves the Lord. Let all work be spiritual—medical, educational, evangelistic, industrial. Don't be caught in the machinery of the works. Keep the spiritual uppermost and the balance right. Many have lost their first spiritual enthusiasm through pressure of work, so pray, pray, PRAY.

All Manner Of Service • Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give. God looks for a willingness and preparedness to be or do anything joyfully. And He opens up His wealth to the men and women who are ready to 'do without', to live disciplined lives, and to whom Jesus Christ is truly all in all.

As poor, yet making many rich,
As having nothing, yet possessing all things...
For all things are yours, and ye are Christ's.