

A Life of Self Discipline

Objectives

To learn about the virtue of self discipline and how to acquire it

References

- ❖ Words of Spiritual Benefit for HH Pope Shenouda the III (Volumes I, II, III & IV)
- ❖ Ten Concepts by HH Pope Shenouda the III (The Concept of Power)

Scriptural Verse

“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9: 27)

Lesson Outlines

What is self discipline?

- ❖ Self discipline or self-control is when you keep yourself from something you desire or will be affected with, so you do not submit to a certain feeling or internal motive but you control yourself.
- ❖ A state of balance: balance holds in itself a lot of wisdom. It is said that virtue is the middle position between two opposites, between intemperance and temperance
- ❖ A must practice with the control of body specially during fasting. Full control over oneself is a sign of a successful fasting.

How can I get this virtue?

- ❖ Control yourself at the time of anger, your inner heart from rage and hatred, and your tongue from nervousness and harsh words - Do not be aggressive.
- ❖ Do not speak or give your opinion quickly.
- ❖ Do not interrupt others or pronounce a decision unless you are sure it is right.
- ❖ Control yourself over any desire that comes into your heart and you long for doing it. Do not submit to every desire but restrain your feelings. Do not make your desires dominate over you but you master over it and bring it under the power of the mind and soul.
- ❖ Control yourself in defending your honor or avenging for yourself.
- ❖ Control yourself with regard to your thoughts; if you were thinking improperly or about trivial things, try to stop it or change it to another course.
- ❖ Control your senses especially your hearing and sight; do not allow yourself to hear or see something indecent.
- ❖ Control yourself at the time of prayer so that you do not wander or stand without reverence before God.
- ❖ Control yourself with regard to time; do not waste it in pleasures when it is valuable.
- ❖ Keep yourself as a temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16) by avoiding whatever defiles the body (Matthew 15:11-20) and by living in communion with the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ Don't rebuke unless it is your responsibility and let it be with humility and love and not with authority and pride. Let it take the form of quiet advice, without hurting feelings.
- ❖ Judge yourself and you would not have the time to criticize others but you will be setting a good example and a good model for them.
- ❖ Struggle while you are on earth before it is too late.

- ❖ Be selective in choosing your friends and those you associate with. Outline the limits of your relationship with them.
- ❖ Don't be proud and refer your gifts and success to God's grace.
- ❖ Be firm in your spiritualities lest you start and will not be able to continue (Luke 2 14: 30).
- ❖ Forget what is behind and reach forward (Philippians 3:13). Remember only what could make your present better and gives you a push forward in repentance or in growth.
- ❖ Be faithful in every little thing to be granted to go to the second mile (Matthew 25:21)

Features of a self disciplined person

- ❖ Has a strong heart that exterior factors cannot overcome or shake.
- ❖ Firm in his spiritualities.
- ❖ Full of the fruits of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in him and gives him power (Acts 1: 8).
- ❖ Smiling and his face is a source of joy for people as gentleness and joy are the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).
- ❖ Growing spiritually due to his firm attitude and lack of instability.
- ❖ Faithful in whatever he does.
- ❖ Controls his personal thoughts and refers to the church lest he falls into a heresy.
- ❖ Controls his behavior lest he stumble or offend others.
- ❖ Solves problems by prayers, wisdom, proper and quiet thinking.
- ❖ His language reveals him as his words are gentle.
- ❖ Practical, living in reality and acts according to facts.
- ❖ Sacrifices his comfort in order to comfort others, may remain silent to give them chance to talk then speak if others wanted to listen to him.
- ❖ Has a powerful will for achievement (even to follow a diet).
- ❖ Has a strong personality: It is said that he who overcomes himself is better than he who defeats a city because an intelligent person without a strong will, could fail in life. "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

Conclusion

Among the characteristics of power is self control. It is the defeat of oneself and not to defeat others. God's Children are supposed to be powerful to overcome the sin despite of all external pressures provided that God be the source of their power. They should not depend on, or take pride in their own power.

Activities / Discussion Points

1. Explain the following verse:
"You have not resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12: 4).
2. Give examples of saints who practiced self-discipline