

McCabe United Methodist Church
Uniting Scripture with Life: Discipline (part 3)
I Peter 5:6-11 * Matthew 16:24-26: July 1, 2012
Pastor Rick Fossum

Tim and his wife owned a dog. The dog's name was Mandan although they lived in Bismarck. One night Tim and his wife came home. It was late in the evening and they discovered that Mandan was missing. Somehow, he got through the backyard fence and was MIA (missing in action). Tim, being a good dog lover went out into the neighborhood and started looking for Mandan.

About 1:00 a.m., as he was walking through his neighborhood, calling out "**Mandan, Mandan,**" a Bismarck police officer spotted Tim. The officer thought he looked a bit strange and suspicious. He stopped Tim and asked him who he was and what he was doing. Tim explained the situation to the officer and the officer was sympathetic. "**After all,**" he said, "**I have a dog of my own.**"

Tim gave the officer a description of Mandan and the officer promised that he would watch for him as he made his rounds through the neighborhood.

Tim continued looking a while longer with no luck. Finally, he gave up for the night, went home and crawled into bed. About 3:30 a.m., the front door bell rang. Tim jumped out of bed and ran to answer the door in his T-shirt and boxers. It was the police officer. "**Tim,**" he said, "**I think I found your dog. Come on. Get in the car and let's check it out before he takes off again.**"

And so Tim ran outside, got into the police car and off they went . . . Tim still wearing nothing but his T-shirt and boxers. Sure enough, it was Mandan. They caught him, put him in the police car and headed back to Tim's home. Suddenly, the radio in the police car crackled, and a dispatcher told the police officer to go an address on Tyler Parkway to investigate a disturbance.

"**Hey,**" Tim said. "**Wait a minute. That's my address. That's my house.**"

The police officer called the dispatcher and asked about the nature of the disturbance. The dispatcher said, "**A lady called and said her front door bell rang at 3:30 a.m.. Her husband went to answer it, but he never came back! She heard the front door slam shut. She thinks her husband has been kidnaped . . . in his underwear!**"

I blame it on a lack of discipline. It was Tim's fault. He should have trained Mandan to

stay home whether the gate was open or shut.

It's about discipline. Why do we need discipline? Why is discipline so important?

Well, for one thing, Jesus said **“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”**

If you don't think denying yourself and taking up the cross and following Jesus doesn't take some discipline . . . you have another think coming.

Now, discipline is not one of my strong suits. I don't know what my strong suits are, but discipline isn't one of them. I've been trying to shed a few pounds lately. As some of you know, it takes discipline, doesn't it? I don't know why I buy *Frosted Flakes*, but I do. And then I wrestle with myself at night before bed. **“Rick,”** I'll say, **“don't eat that bowl of Frosted Flakes. It's not good for you.”** And the other Rick will answer, **“Yes I know I shouldn't, but *Frosted Flakes* taste great, right?”** And back and forth I go. You know how it ends up, don't you?

Discipline. It's such an important part of life. Think about it. Personal hygiene, eating healthy, speaking kind words, training the dog, exercising, mowing the lawn, volunteering at church, reading the Bible, praying, looking for the best in people rather than the worst, coming to church on a regular basis. You name it, it all requires discipline.

Wishing doesn't get it done. I wish I had a nickel for every bowl of *Frosted Flakes* I've eaten. I'd be a rich man. It takes discipline. **“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”** It takes discipline.

I read an article about Ray Allen. If you're an NBA fan, you know Ray Allen plays basketball for the Boston Celtics. He owns the record for making the most three point baskets. Allen says he arrives at the arena 3-4 hours before every game and shoots until he makes 150 baskets. Can you imagine the millions of shots he's taken in practice and in his back yard?

Yes, he's good. Yes, he has a lot of God-given talent. But do you know what? Without discipline . . . without getting out there every day and shooting the 100s of practice shots, he'd be just like you and me.

Discipline is a crucial part of life. If you hope to be a good husband or wife, mother or father, if you hope to be a good athlete or musician, a good sales person, a good neighbor, a good teacher, a good anything, it's going to take discipline.

The late actress Katherine Hepburn put it this way **“Without discipline, there's no life at all.”** That may be a bit dramatic, but discipline is important.

Discipline is the ability to develop good habits. Someone once said, **“it takes about seven days to develop a bad habit and about 21 days to correct it.”**

A woman was driving her car one day when it just stopped running. She was on a busy road. A man pulled up behind her in his car. He sat there for a second or two and then he started honking his horn. Picture this woman. She’s desperately trying to start her car while some jerk is behind her honking his horn. Finally, she had enough. She got out of her car and walked back to his car and said sweetly, **“Why don’t we change places? I’ll honk the horn and you can start the car!”**

It’s easy to grumble and complain and honk our horns. It takes discipline to be a part of the solution.

Jesus said, **“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”** Nobody said it was easy. For me, carrying the cross of Christ and following Jesus is hard. Some days I do pretty good and some days I don’t. But, I’m not giving up.

What about you? Do you lack discipline in certain areas? Welcome to the club. May you need to quit smoking or drinking or over eating, or being lazy or getting out of bed in the morning, or chasing around, or whatever it is, you need discipline. The kind of discipline that can only come from God.

A boy asked his father, **“Dad, if three frogs were sitting on a limb that hung over a pool, and one frog decided to jump into the pool, how many frogs would be left on the limb?”**

The dad replied, **“Two.”**

“No,” the son replied. **“Listen. There are three frogs and one decides to jump, how many are left?”**

The dad said, **“Oh, I get it. If one decides to jump, the others will follow. So none are left.”**

The boy said, **“No dad, the answer is three. The frog only decided to jump. Deciding to jump isn’t the same as jumping. There are three frogs left.”**

If we want to make some changes in our lives. If we want to change some bad habits. If we want to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus, we need discipline. Wanting discipline and having discipline are two different things.

My prayer for all of us today is to jump. Listen again to these words from Peter in I Peter 5:

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.”

-1 Peter 5:6-11 (NRSV)

And amen.