

Disciplined life part 2

Discipline of dependence and provision.

At least three times in his life, the prophet Elijah had to be supported, because he had nothing himself.

He had to be fed by ravens:-

“So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.” (1 Kings 17:5-6)

He had to be fed by a poor widow, with the very last she had:-

So he went to Zarepath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there, gathering sticks. He called to her and asked “Would you bring me a little water in a jar, so I may have a drink?” As she was going to get it he called “And bring me please a piece of bread.” (1 Kings 17: 10-11)

He had to be fed by the angels:-

“All at once an angel touched him and said “Get up and eat.” He looked around and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and then lay down again.” (1 Kings 19:6)

Elijah depended on God for what he needed. God replied with His provision. This discipline is very necessary for a number of reasons:

Jesus commanded it – “Your heavenly Father knows ..” (Matt 7:32)

It is part of our faith as prophets that we live in this way. We have to be seen to be trusting him for whom we speak. (Habakkuk 3: 17-18)

This keeps us clear of the “deceitfulness of wealth” (Mark 4:19) which destroys ministries.

We are not tempted to use the word of God for personnel gain. (Titus 1:7)

It is very hard to live in this way. We will often be short or have nothing. God provides through the people of God, and they often fail him. When they do we suffer. It is hard not to use our gift for personal gain. It hurts to be

hurt and to be alone, without resources and without hope. But in this way, we are seen to be depending on God, We hear more clearly from God. We have an edge to our message which comfort and ease would deny us. It is vital that we develop this discipline of dependence. But it is not easy. *We have to make a commitment to it at the beginning of our ministries, and refuse to look back. Then we have to trust to God to hold us to our commitment. Have you done this? Will you?*

Discipline of the body

Prophets and the body of Christ have never had an easy relationship. There are large areas where misunderstanding can occur. Here are just a few areas of difficulty:-

Prophets find it difficult to be patient, but leaders cannot go forward too fast. Leaders try too hard to control the prophetic spirit, failing to understand that if a prophet is too controlled, he becomes useless.

Prophets find it hard to believe that their word is not from God. Leaders have the responsibility to test, and say such things.

Prophets are strong in their ministry, and do not appreciate being corrected.

Leaders don't like having criticism of their work, or of their fellowship.

Prophets often do not receive the support and love they need. But they don't always make it easy for others to give that support and love.

So – do we just abandon each other? Should all prophets go off and start their own Churches? This would leave each side happy but totally lost, and totally outside the will of God for His people. For he appointed Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers to lead us. Leaving is not an option. So how do we move forward? Here are my “belonging principles.”

1. Belonging to the body. (1 Corinthians 12:12)
2. Loving the body. (Ephesians 5:25)
3. Respect the leadership of the body.
(1 Timothy 5:17)
4. Helping the body test prophecy. (1 John 4:1)
5. Knowing how to speak, and when to say it. (Habbakuk 2:3)
6. Relationships with other prophets in the body. (1 Cor. 12: 29 -32)

It is vital to have a discipline of the body. Examine these six points, and see if they are part of your discipline. If not, ask the Holy Spirit to give you the love of Jesus for the body, (Ephesians 5:25) and then pray for a good discipline in your own life.

The discipline of aloneness.

The life of the prophet is a lonely one. He often finds himself in the lonely places, either because the people of God will not listen to him, or because the Spirit of God has sent him out there to be with God. This is a hard and lonely experience. Jesus also had it.

In the wilderness. (Luke 4: 1-13)

In Gethsemane. (Mark 14:32)

Before Sanhedrin. (Mark 14: 53-65)

On Cross. (John 19:16-27)

How can we survive these desert places?

We have to accept this as a fact of our lives. There is no escape, and we should not seek one.

In being alone, we are closer to depending on Jesus alone. Prophets need to be in this relationship. Otherwise they will not hear clearly from Jesus. The world will be forever intruding into the word.

We must have some friends who we can totally trust, who will not let us drift too far into the desert places.

Do you find yourself in the desert as a prophet, or a prophetic voice? Do you rebel against this, or accept it as part of your calling before God? Study the Temptation stories (Matthew chapter 4: Luke chapter 4) and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you the skill of living in the desert places. Commit yourself to stop complaining. It will never get better, and it will probably get worse. So far better to get equipped for these lonely experiences.

The discipline of the heavenly places.

The prophet spends his time in the heavenly places. There he:-

Sees the loving heart of God. (1 John 4:8)

Sees the victory of Jesus. (Revelation 19:7) (Colossians 2:15)

Feels the pain in the heart of God. (Matthew 26:38)

Sees the pressure of the enemy. (1 Peter 5:8)

Knows what must be said. (Jeremiah 1:9)

He responds to the movements in the heavenly places, speaking the words and sharing the visions as the battle moves in the heavenly places.

How do we exercise the discipline of the heavenly places?

We have to learn to keep our eyes and heart fixed on Jesus, as he exercises his heavenly ministry. (Hebrews 12:2)

We have to learn to grasp the things we see, hear and feel in the heavenly places. The things of this world will always crowd out the spiritual – because we live in a physical realm. (1 Corinthians 15: 46-48)

We have to learn to test and weigh what we see and hear and feel. Satan is also moving in the heavenly places. (2 Corinthians 11:14)

We have to learn the discipline of spiritual warfare in prayer and meditation, and in our daily lives. (Ephesians 6:10-18)

We have to accept that not everyone sees and hears as we do. (Num. 12:6)

Learn to spend time in the heavenly places, and learn to exercise the things taught above.

Discipline of prayer

Prayer is the essence of Christian life:-

“Call to me and I will answer you..” (Jeremiah 33:3)

“Whatever you ask in my name I will do it..” (John 14:13)

For the prophet it is the essence of his life, but it is also much more than setting aside times of prayer. For the prophet, all of life is prayer, and prayer is all of life. Wherever he is, and whatever he is doing, this is prayer. These things need especially to be in his mind:-

His prayers will be guided by the Bible, by dreams, visions, words from God.

His prayer needs to be private, and he also needs to be part of the praying body of God’s people.

He must have the ability to pray in this way, AND to remember, write, meditate and discern what he is experiencing in prayer.

Do you live the whole of your life as a prayer? Learn to develop the discipline of prayer, until this is so.

Discipline of being human.

It's really important for the prophet or prophetic voice to recognise his humanity. This means that he:-

- Can make mistakes.
- Can get angry.
- Can speak from his own heart.
- Can mishear and misunderstand.
- Can get tired, frustrated and low in energy.
- Can say the wrong thing at the wrong time and in the wrong place.

We need to be fully human in our ministries. Then God can reflect himself and His word more fully to those who are exposed to our ministry. Denying our humanity means that we have to strive to be perfect and infallible. We cannot hope to achieve this, and consequently, when we fail, we are devastated. But if we can accept our humanity and our frailty, when we fail, which we will - it is part of the human condition - we won't be devastated. We will be able to accept it, and even more, allow that very failure to be our teacher.

Being human is not a discipline! But it does need to be so for the prophet. He has to have a firm understanding of his humanity, because of the intense spiritual nature of his life and work. *Ask God to show you yourself more and more. Ask Him to show you your strengths and your weaknesses. Ask Him to allow you to be fully "you" in your service of Him.*

Discipline of hardship, suffering and endurance.

The Christian life is a joyful and satisfying experience. But its also a tough one. There are periods of intense loneliness; (Mark 14: 32-41) times of misunderstanding; (Matthew 11: 18-19) times when the enemy presses hard.

(Luke 22:3) We have no option in these hard times but to tough it out, looking to Jesus who endured the same. We need the determination of Habbakuk, (Hab 3:17) and Jonathan (1 Samuel 14:6)

How can we survive in the struggle to endure?

We must understand it is part of the cost of faith. (Philippians 1:21)
We must discipline our lives in prayer and Bible study. (2 Tim 3:16)
We must keep our armour bright. (Ephesians 6: 10-18)
We must never give up. (Daniel 3:16-17)

Discipline yourself to endure the struggle to the end. Ask the Holy Spirit daily to give you the courage to face the struggle, and to endure to the end. (Ephesians 6:13)

The discipline of leaving alone.

One of the hardest disciplines which faces the prophet is the discipline of leaving alone. In Mark chapter 10, a rich man comes to Jesus, to ask about the way to eternal life. Jesus speaks to him, and then says:- “You lack one thing. Go and sell all you have and give to the poor...then come, follow me.” The Bible says “The man went away sad, because he had great wealth.” (Mark 10:17-22). The key thought for us is what follows. Jesus did nothing. He didn't run after the man to speak some more, or invite him to come back another time. Jesus had said what needed to be said, and then he left things to go their way.

Prophets have to learn to do the same. Our task is to seek God, and then, at the right time to deliver the message in the right way. That is the end of our task. Often we are tempted to:

- Say more than we should.
- Say more than has been given us to say.
- Tried to explain what we mean.
- To plead with people to listen.
- To repeat over and over again what we feel God is saying.

We have to resist this - it is a natural human emotion. We want to be liked, to be understood, to be accepted. We must remember that we are ambassadors for the King. It is His word not ours. We do not have to plead his case. We must

retain our dignity, and be silent. This will lead us into great difficulty. People will reject us, ridicule us and throw us out of the assemblies - and all this because we wouldn't explain more clearly what we meant. "Prophet" I have heard on many occasions "be reasonable. Explain your message. Give us another chance. Give us more time." But I do not. When I have done my job, I have done my job. ***This is a hard discipline. Ask God to give you the courage - and it does take courage - to stop when your ministry is done, whatever the consequences.***

The discipline of the servant heart.

Jesus had the servant heart nature, and of all who are part of God's Kingdom, he was the one who least needed to have it. He was King of Kings, from everlasting to everlasting. All authority rested in his hands, and surely on visiting his own creation, he was entitled to be seen for who he was? Yet, he was prepared to serve. The true prophet must have the servant heart. A willingness to give away, to be considered nothing, to think nothing of personal gain, position, respect or honour. A prophet must work hard to guard this discipline in himself. Others will honour him for what he has done, or what he hears. They will hold him in awe, and try to elevate him to a position to which he does not belong. It's so easy to be swept along by all this adulation, respect, and emotion. It appeals to that which is human in us.

How can I keep my servant heart?

By knowing the servant heart of Jesus.
By spending time at the cross.
By knowing your own heart.
By the work of the Holy Spirit in you.
By the act of your own will.

Ask the Holy Spirit to examine your heart, to root out all self, and to keep you humble. Read John 13: 1-5

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