

If You Always Do What You've Always Done

"Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid." (Proverbs 12:1, ESV)

A man had lost his car keys in a half-lit Wal-mart parking lot one winter night. Another man pulls up in his car to see the man crawling around, looking. He says, "What're you doing, sir?" The first says, "I lost my keys. I've looked over this same spot for an hour. No luck so far." After a few minutes of helping the first to search in blistery cold weather, the second says, "Are you sure you lost them over here?" The first says, "No, I lost it on the other side of the lot." His face red, the second says, "Friend, if you lost your keys on the other side of the lot, why are you looking over on this side?" The first says, "Well, for one thing, the light's much better on this side!"

For years, I wondered why I was "cursed" in being obese. Perhaps I believed that simply becoming a Christian would solve all of my troubles! In truth, I was obese because I had led myself there or been led by the example of others. I had to change what I was doing else I would continue to get the same result. After changing my heart, giving it to God and asking for him to change me, I had the power to change my actions, my habits: I could discipline myself in what I ate and in regular exercise. God has blessed me in allowing me to shed a considerable amount of excess weight.

Discipline is necessary in all aspects of our lives. We will lead others as we influence them. What about our efforts in evangelism? Are we still only looking in the well-lit corners of the lot? Let us recognize that our hearts, minds, actions, and habits must change to practice discipline from the heart for evangelism. Are churches "cursed" with declining growth? Whatever condition we are in, we have led ourselves into it or been led by the example of others. Let us ask God for a changed heart so we may discipline ourselves in contacting the world. God has blessed us in allowing us to carry his gospel to our neighbors, friends, family, and even those who hate us. There is nothing wrong with the efforts of Christians that restoration of heart to God in discipline, purpose, habit, study of the word, and service cannot repair. As the Psalmist wrote, "Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long." (Psa. 25:4-5) And as Paul wrote, "For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth." (2 Cor. 13:8) Let us do what God would have us do to get the result he would have us get!