

**Romans 6:19** I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

**Central idea** – Holiness of character is developed one choice at a time as we choose to act righteously in every situation we encounter during the day.

### Developing the Discipline of Grace

1. The Bible is like life itself in presenting us with a constant series of choices, many with moral consequences. Consider, for openers, your daily commute to work each morning (or your daily drive somewhere else). What are some possible moral consequences of the following everyday choices?

The thoughts I choose to think while driving.

The way I choose to drive

Whether I choose to stop by the roadside to help a motorist in distress.

The radio station/tape/CD I choose to listen to.

2. Read Ephesians 4:25-32 and list five moral “either-or” choices that believers are faced with.

**25**Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. **26**"In your anger do not sin"<sup>1</sup>: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, **27**and do not give the devil a foothold. **28**He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

**29**Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. **30**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31**Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. **32**Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

- 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  - 4.
  - 5.
3. One sinful choice usually leads to another, and eventually to a habit, because sin clouds our reason, dulls our conscience, stimulates our sinful desires, and weakens our will. Think of a sinful habit you have found hard to shake off. When you have chosen to give in to this, how have you experienced your reason being clouded, your conscience being dulled, your desire being stimulated, or your will to resist being weakened? Give an example of this happening to you.
4. a. Given the habit-forming nature of sin, what remedy does Paul propose in Romans 6:19?
- b. What does this look like in practice? For instance, how would it apply to the situation you described in question 3?
5. When exhorting Timothy, and us, to “exercise thyself rather unto godliness” (1 Timothy 4:7), Paul used a word from the athletic arena that describes the physical exercise regimen of young men as they prepared themselves to compete in the Olympic games of that day. Just as those young men trained themselves physically in order to compete in the games, so also we are to train ourselves spiritually toward godliness. How do we “exercise ourselves” in the spiritual realm?
6. Think of one of the persistent sin patterns in your life that you have already identified and committed yourself to uproot in previous sessions. You need to be especially vigilant in this area to make the right choices. You have already made too many wrong choices; that is why this sin pattern is so deeply entrenched. No doubt you would like to be rid of this sin and have prayed to

God to take it away. But are you willing to say NO to it, to “put to death (mortify) the misdeeds of the body”? If so, record here the choice you will make the next time the temptation presents itself, and then look to the Holy Spirit to work in you “to will and to act” (Philippians 2:13) in carrying out that commitment.

7.
  - a. How do you feel when you think about having to make that choice?
  - b. What will help you make the right choice?
  
8. People vary in their ability to discipline themselves. The more naturally disciplined person wonders why everyone else can't be as successful in mortification as he or she is. But often all that person has done is exchanged one sin for another. Another person, less self-disciplined, tries to mortify some particular sin by sheer willpower, but fails and becomes frustrated. Which of the two errors – pride or frustration – do you most commonly fall into when you try to mortify sin on your own apart from utter dependence on the Spirit?
  
9.
  - a. Think of an unusually persistent sin in your life. If we are to succeed in putting sin to death, we must realize that the sin we are dealing with is none other than a continual exalting of our desire over God's known will. This will also involve intense struggle,. Since mortification is a difficult work, aimed at subduing strong desires and deeply ingrained habits, we need the help of one or two friends to engage in the struggle with us. Name one or two trusted people you can turn to:
  - b. If you can't think of anyone to trust with this issue, why do you suppose that's the case?
    - i. My friends are untrustworthy.
    - ii. I'm too proud
    - iii. My friends are good people, but they would never be able to understand how someone like me could struggle with this.
    - iv. I don't have any close friends.
    - v. I don't believe I need anyone else to help me with this.

10. a. How does each of these passages describe the job of helping our friends struggle against sin?

Galatians 6:1-2

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Hebrews 3:13

Hebrews 10:24-25

James 5:16

- b. Do these passages motivate you to seek help from your friends in your battle against sin? Why or why not?

**What's the point of all this?**

All that we have studied in the last few sessions has been leading us to this point. We do not become more holy either by discipline or by dependence. Neither do we become more holy by committing ourselves to god or by developing Bible-based convictions. We become more holy by obedience to the Word of God, by choosing to obey His will as revealed in the Scriptures in all the various circumstances of our lives.