Dear Open Door Family,

I am always fascinated by people who become the best at what they do. Whether it be in the area of academics, arts, sports, or business, very few people reach the top in their field without hard work and discipline. Carol and I have a friend, whom we have known since he was 3-4 yrs. old, who plays in the NFL. God has given him great physical ability and skill but he has disciplined himself for years and worked hard so that he could do the things that he does on the football field. He has spent thousands of hours working on conditioning, agility, speed and endurance. Paul used the example of sports to challenge us to live disciplined Christian lives. Let's look at these verses together.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 *(NLT) Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! [25] ALL athletes are DISCIPLINED in their TRAINING. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an ETERNAL prize. [26] So* ***I run with PURPOSE*** *in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. [27]* ***I DISCIPLINE my body like an athlete****, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.*

Paul is saying we are in the race of life and it is NOT enough that we merely compete - we are supposed to do our very best. In order to do our best we need to be DISCIPLINED in the way we live. We may NOT train to be a Christian - but perhaps we should approach being a disciple of Jesus Christ with the same tenacity that a professional athlete has towards becoming the best they can be. Paul the apostle is the one saying I discipline myself like an athlete - I train so that I will not be disqualified. What he means is that he refuses to coast in his walk with God. He will continue to study God's Word, Meditate on God's Word, and pursue his walk with Jesus SO THAT he will be able to represent His Lord well no matter where he is or what he is doing. Here are some practical applications: **Life Application Notes:** "Self-Discipline requires an honest look at your strengths and weaknesses, with emphasis on the latter. It means building the will to say no when a powerful appetite inside you screams yes. For example, when you have discipline yourself, you can: (1) say no to friends or situations that will lead you away from Christ, (2) say no to pornography, or immorality, and (3) say no to laziness and say yes to spending regular time pursuing the Lord Jesus. **Self-discipline is a long, steady course in learning attitudes that do not come naturally, and channeling natural appetites toward God's purposes."**

PRAYER: Lord, God thank you for the challenge to live a disciplined life for the purpose of godliness. Help me to be willing to say NO to myself so that I can say YES to You in my life.

Pastor Mark Kieft
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