

## STAYING QUALIFIED

*Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. (1 Corinthians 9:25, ESV)*

**M**AYBE YOU'VE HEARD THE EXPRESSION. It is semi-anonymously credited to "a Navy SEAL." When you read it, that attribution will make sense.

Under pressure, you don't rise to the level of the occasion,  
you sink to the level of your training.  
That's why we train so hard.

As golfers, Gary Player fed us all similar encouragement when he once was called a lucky player. He retorted, "The more I practice, the luckier I get." The evidence suggests that Player did not coin this phrase himself, but he employed it in a way we golfers will never forget. Want to advance your game? Practice. Then practice again.

When we turn to our life of faith, the attitude does not die. The apostle Paul turned not to the military or to golf for his metaphor, however; he turned to runners and boxers: "So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:26-27).

We have just come out of our series on being qualified for kingdom work, and here is Paul writing of the same topic. His concern was singular: Stay qualified. His plan to do so: Discipline. His battleground: His own physical body.

There is an age-old suggestion that the body and the spirit are separate entities, without influence on one another. This was the heresy of Gnosticism. You won't find it in Scripture. The logic here is simple when examined through the lens of a practical example. When a person neglects their body through bad diet and lack of exercise, their resulting lack of energy and string of medical problems rob them of the ability to do important Christian deeds: persist in prayer, maintain a Bible-reading habit, serve others without weariness. Common men—like the disciples in the garden on the night Jesus was betrayed—fall asleep as the night continues. Only those trained in vigilance—like Navy SEALs—maintain it through long hours of intense demand.

Maybe it is time to attend to your body, that temple through which you worship the Lord. Do you keep its urgings in check for the sake of God's work? Take time to assess your patterns of discipline and rebuild them as necessary.

**Opening questions** Have you ever taken extra time to work at improving your golf game? What did this look like? • How disciplined a person would you say you are generally? Does this differ from arena to arena?

**READING** Proverbs 12:1, Ephesians 6:4; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

### Discipline's partner (Proverbs 12 & Ephesians 6)

What is discipline coupled with in these passages? Where do you go for good instruction? How does discipline aid in translating instruction into knowledge?

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### Caring for the temple (1 Corinthians 6)

What metaphor did Paul use for the human body? What matters did Paul address here in regards to keeping the body/temple clean?

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What is the meaning and importance of this phrase: "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price"? How does this influence the self-control you exercise over your body?

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