

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org
Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts July 2018

The Lost Spiritual Discipline

By: Tim Challies

watchfulness

We are all accustomed to reading works on the spiritual disciplines of the Christian life. We know that as Christians we ought to discipline ourselves to ensure we maintain a lifelong focus on Word, prayer, and fellowship. And so we read the Bible and meditate on it, we pray as individuals and families, and we maintain fellowship with one another through local church worship and the sacraments or ordinances. Well and good! This is the stuff of the Christian life. Yet in his classic work *Holy Helps for a Godly Life*, Richard Rogers draws out a spiritual discipline that has largely been lost and neglected in recent years—the discipline of watchfulness.

The Discipline of Watch-

fulness

Watchfulness is “a careful observing of our hearts and diligent looking to our ways, that they may be pleasing and acceptable unto God.” It is done in obedience to passages like 1 Peter 5:8 which says, “Be sober-minded; be watchful” and Matthew 26:41 where Jesus commands, “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.” There is a kind of active watchfulness that Scripture commends but which we too often fail to heed and this poses a great danger to us. “Without watchfulness, we are before long plunged into many foul temptations by Satan and by our own sinful hearts. The necessity of this one help may also be easily seen in our own experience and the contrary sin of carelessness. For what grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit of God more easily than anything that chases away our godliness? Or what except carelessness so opens the door to confusion?”

There are two keys to it: our hearts and our ways.

Thus watchfulness is first the close *observation of our hearts*, for, as Solomon commands, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23). Second, it is a *close study of our ways* or our lives. “I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence” (Psalm 39:1). In watchfulness we take careful heed to our inner and outer selves, our desires and deeds, to ensure they are both pleasing to God.

So how is this discipline carried out? First, by putting ourselves in a frame of watchfulness. “Those who desire to be helped by watchfulness must purpose to set their mind and delight upon it. They must be content to be dealt with like children, who are not allowed to handle or play with knives; or as the mentally insane, who are kept from occasions to hurt themselves.” In other words, the watchful Christian must diligently keep himself from situations

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org
Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts July 2018

The Lost Spiritual Discipline

By: Tim Challies

watchfulness

We are all accustomed to reading works on the spiritual disciplines of the Christian life. We know that as Christians we ought to discipline ourselves to ensure we maintain a lifelong focus on Word, prayer, and fellowship. And so we read the Bible and meditate on it, we pray as individuals and families, and we maintain fellowship with one another through local church worship and the sacraments or ordinances. Well and good! This is the stuff of the Christian life. Yet in his classic work *Holy Helps for a Godly Life*, Richard Rogers draws out a spiritual discipline that has largely been lost and neglected in recent years—the discipline of watchfulness.

The Discipline of Watch-

fulness

Watchfulness is “a careful observing of our hearts and diligent looking to our ways, that they may be pleasing and acceptable unto God.” It is done in obedience to passages like 1 Peter 5:8 which says, “Be sober-minded; be watchful” and Matthew 26:41 where Jesus commands, “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.” There is a kind of active watchfulness that Scripture commends but which we too often fail to heed and this poses a great danger to us. “Without watchfulness, we are before long plunged into many foul temptations by Satan and by our own sinful hearts. The necessity of this one help may also be easily seen in our own experience and the contrary sin of carelessness. For what grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit of God more easily than anything that chases away our godliness? Or what except carelessness so opens the door to confusion?”

There are two keys to it: our hearts and our ways.

Thus watchfulness is first the close *observation of our hearts*, for, as Solomon commands, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23). Second, it is a *close study of our ways* or our lives. “I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence” (Psalm 39:1). In watchfulness we take careful heed to our inner and outer selves, our desires and deeds, to ensure they are both pleasing to God.

So how is this discipline carried out? First, by putting ourselves in a frame of watchfulness. “Those who desire to be helped by watchfulness must purpose to set their mind and delight upon it. They must be content to be dealt with like children, who are not allowed to handle or play with knives; or as the mentally insane, who are kept from occasions to hurt themselves.” In other words, the watchful Christian must diligently keep himself from situations



or contexts in which he is likely to sin or be gravely tempted. Second, by prayer. “Prayer quickens watchfulness and puts life into it, causing it to be continued with much cheerfulness and little tediousness, while we prayerfully trust God to bless it unto us.” This prayerful watching must continue as long as we are in danger of being tempted to sin—which is all of life, though perhaps particularly accentuated in certain times and contexts.

Here is how he declares the benefit of this discipline. “This taking heed therefore to yourself and especially to your heart (because the words and actions come from the heart) must be your companion all the time, and you must set this watch before the door of your lips and be well acquainted with looking diligently to your ways, that it may go well with you and that you may prosper. But if you are a stranger to watchfulness, look to fall often—I mean

to fall dangerously. Look to find many wounds in your soul and to lack many comforts in your life.”

You can read more about this lost discipline in *Holy Helps for a Godly Life* or in Brian Hedges’s book *Watchfulness*.

[Used with permission: <https://www.challies.com>]

Understanding Your Vote

By: Steve Huston



As Christians, we have duties that, when fulfilled properly, help to shape our society and ensure those freedoms which have been given to us by God. First, we are called to share the gospel. Second, we are responsible to take part in the voting process. This helps to restrain the evil in our culture and to help ensure that we can peacefully continue our first duty.

When voting, remember that it’s just as important to vote in the primaries as it is to vote in what too

many consider the “real” election. It’s important to do your homework when looking at candidates. First and foremost we need to understand where the candidates stand on the issues. Most importantly, it’s vital to know where God stands on those issues, by really studying His Word.

When looking at candidates who are running for political office, we don’t ask people to vote according to color, gender, or even religious creed; vote for those who are most likely to run things according to the law of our land (the Constitution).

Its founding principles are Biblically based and have served us well for over 230 years. Did you know?... There are candidates with Muslim Brotherhood ties; there are candidates that desire to uphold the lawlessness of sanctuary cities and states; there are candidates that desire to continue the oppressiveness of entitlements and unchecked welfare. These things are unbiblical and neither makes a great country nor a great state. Are you awake and discerning? Vote and encourage others to do likewise. God is sovereign; but man has his responsibility as well.



or contexts in which he is likely to sin or be gravely tempted. Second, by prayer. “Prayer quickens watchfulness and puts life into it, causing it to be continued with much cheerfulness and little tediousness, while we prayerfully trust God to bless it unto us.” This prayerful watching must continue as long as we are in danger of being tempted to sin—which is all of life, though perhaps particularly accentuated in certain times and contexts.

Here is how he declares the benefit of this discipline. “This taking heed therefore to yourself and especially to your heart (because the words and actions come from the heart) must be your companion all the time, and you must set this watch before the door of your lips and be well acquainted with looking diligently to your ways, that it may go well with you and that you may prosper. But if you are a stranger to watchfulness, look to fall often—I mean

to fall dangerously. Look to find many wounds in your soul and to lack many comforts in your life.”

You can read more about this lost discipline in *Holy Helps for a Godly Life* or in Brian Hedges’s book *Watchfulness*.

[Used with permission: <https://www.challies.com>]

Understanding Your Vote

By: Steve Huston



As Christians, we have duties that, when fulfilled properly, help to shape our society and ensure those freedoms which have been given to us by God. First, we are called to share the gospel. Second, we are responsible to take part in the voting process. This helps to restrain the evil in our culture and to help ensure that we can peacefully continue our first duty.

When voting, remember that it’s just as important to vote in the primaries as it is to vote in what too

many consider the “real” election. It’s important to do your homework when looking at candidates. First and foremost we need to understand where the candidates stand on the issues. Most importantly, it’s vital to know where God stands on those issues, by really studying His Word.

When looking at candidates who are running for political office, we don’t ask people to vote according to color, gender, or even religious creed; vote for those who are most likely to run things according to the law of our land (the Constitution).

Its founding principles are Biblically based and have served us well for over 230 years. Did you know?... There are candidates with Muslim Brotherhood ties; there are candidates that desire to uphold the lawlessness of sanctuary cities and states; there are candidates that desire to continue the oppressiveness of entitlements and unchecked welfare. These things are unbiblical and neither makes a great country nor a great state. Are you awake and discerning? Vote and encourage others to do likewise. God is sovereign; but man has his responsibility as well.