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While growing up, I enjoyed competing in multiple types of sports, doing whatever was needed to be my best and to win. As rewarding as these physical competitions and achievements were, no victory has been as sweet as effectively leading God's people to the more than abundant life. No matter what task I've chosen to do, the greatest successes I've experienced have been while practicing temperance: the discipline of self-control. We can lead ourselves and others with godly temperance as we imitate the greatest example of leading with temperance: God Himself.

Before we lead others according to the Word, we need to be able to lead ourselves. To lead ourselves, we must practice self-control and temperance in our daily lives.

*I Corinthians 9:25:*

*And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.*

*Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

To strive for the mastery, we must be temperate. "Striveth for the mastery" is an athletic term meaning "to compete." When I competed in track and field, there were certain standards I needed to follow so I could be my best and win my races. I had to discipline myself to run according to the rules of the team, which required waking up early for morning practices. As much as I wanted to sleep in and skip my extra training sessions, I had to temper myself to the standards of the sport if I wanted to be the most successful. In the world, temperance like this can be practiced for earthly, temporary rewards; however, as born-again believers, we can practice temperance for eternal rewards in our daily routines, the stewardship of our belongings, our choice of activities, and more!

God has given us ways to discipline ourselves so we can achieve success in the spiritual competition of life. And these standards of temperance are exhibited by God Himself. He is our greatest example of this principle, in how He leads His children with temperance.

God displays temperance as He leads His children with mercy and grace. We can do this too. God is good always! Even when our actions deserve judgment, He chooses to be merciful. And in addition to being merciful, God treats us with grace, His divine favor.

*II John 3:*

*Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.*

Both mercy and grace are undeserved, unearned, and bestowed regardless of our behavior (whether we wake up for morning practice at the track or not!). God gives us His mercy and grace with temperance and consistency—without succumbing to passions as people do.

Regardless of circumstances, we, too, can remain temperate, controlling ourselves to stay merciful and gracious with others. When we lead and serve with mercy and grace, we are imitating God's example of temperance.

As followers of God, we can also exercise temperance and effectively lead and serve others by fleeing youthful lusts.

*II Timothy 2:22:*

*Flee also youthful lusts: but follow [pursue] righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

We exercise temperance with others in our daily interactions as we pursue the things of God. We want the best for others, so we set aside worldly distractions and desires, keep our needs and wants in balance, and lead others to God's Word.

Instead of following after things that will not benefit others, we align our thoughts and behavior with what the Word says. We choose to follow righteousness (right living), believing, love, and peace with others. The quality of our lives and the lives of those we lead will increase as we practice temperance while making decisions based on the truth of God's Word.

To enjoy success in the spiritual competition, we must follow God's example. We will experience the greatest victory in bringing ourselves and others to the more abundant life as we lovingly lead and serve as He does—with godly temperance.

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