

1 Timothy – The Household of God

This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare (1 Timothy 1:18 ESV)

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵ if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:14-15 ESV)

Train Yourself For Godliness

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1 Timothy 4:6-10

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Introduction:

Good morning! Please turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 4.

As you do that, I want to ask you a question: Why should you study this letter to a young Pastor in Ephesus? Or, to put the question differently: Does this apply at all to your life?

If you don't know how to answer that question, then you will likely find yourself tuning out of every sermon in this series. If you think these verses only apply to Timothy – or that they only apply to pastors and elders – then you're going to give yourself permission to daydream about things that *actually apply* to your life.

But I want to tell you this morning that this book IS for you. While you're certainly not Timothy, and while most of you are not pastors or elders, we are ALL called to ministry in our various spheres of life. We are a KINGDOM of PRIESTS! The lessons in this letter will make you a better mentor. The lessons in this letter will make you a better mother. The lessons in this letter will make you a better evangelist. This word is FOR YOU.

To that end, I want to share a story from World War 2 that, I think, will help us as we approach our text for this morning.

It was the summer of 1940, and the Nazis were on the brink of dealing a devastating blow to the British Army. The allied forces had been overwhelmed by Hitler's military prowess. France had fallen, and 200,000 British soldiers had been pushed to the beaches of Dunkirk along with 100,000 more French and Belgian troops. The beach was separated from Great Britain by a mere 20 miles, but the soldiers had no hope of swimming the gap.

When all seemed lost, Lord John Gort put a plan on the table. It was a ridiculous plan, really. He called upon the civilians of Great Britain to mobilize their personal boats and their shipping vessels and to send anything that would float to the beach of Dunkirk. It was called "Operation Dynamo."

The Brits rose to the occasion. Brave men and women departed on a 20-mile rescue mission while their boats were peppered with fire from a Nazi air assault overhead. Miraculously, the mission was a success, and most of the 300,000 allied soldiers who had been stranded were brought home to safety.¹

Here's the lesson that we learn from the rescue at Dunkirk: When people are stranded in a hopeless situation – when your friends, and your neighbours, and your family are trapped in a scenario that will certainly lead to death – then you are no longer a civilian. You're a soldier.

Here's my fear – I think that we as Christians in North America have adopted a civilian mindset. Even though we see our loved ones trapped in sin – even though we see our neighbours ensnared by the evil one – we have been conditioned to believe that someone else is better equipped to help. "The professionals will share the gospel." "What can I possibly do?"

My prayer is that each and every one of us will leave today with a clear understanding that there is a LOT that we can do! My prayer is that we will commence with our own "Operation Dynamo" and that we will mobilize *every* Christian in this church to bring those men, women, boys and girls across the great expanse and into the safety of the gospel.

¹ I was helped greatly by the summary provided by Nate Sullivan, *Dunkirk Evacuation: History, Summary and Facts*. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/dunkirk-evacuation-history-summary-facts.html> Accessed February 15, 2022.

In our passage last week, we heard a sober reminder that some will fall away. There is a spiritual battle raging in Ephesus and the casualties are beginning to mount. In our passage this morning, Paul calls Timothy – and anyone else who is willing to engage with the gospel mission – to action.

Hear now God’s holy, inspired, inerrant, living and active word to us today.

If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.⁷ Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness;⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.⁹ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.¹⁰ For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. (1 Timothy 4:6-10 ESV)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

You probably noticed a recurring theme in this passage. Paul uses the language of “training” three times. But what is the purpose of this training? Look again at verse 7:

Rather train yourself for **godliness** (1 Timothy 4:7 ESV)

If we are going to be of any use in this rescue mission, we must train ourselves in godliness. That’s not just true for young pastor Timothy. That’s true for ALL of us.

But what does *godliness* even mean? What does that look like? When you envision a godly person, who do you see? And what is it about them that strikes you as godly?

The Greek word that Paul uses here carries with it the sense of devotion, piety, and of an awesome respect accorded to God.²

If we are being honest, an awesome respect of God is not our natural default. Our default is to take Him lightly. Our default is to go days, weeks, and even months at a time without even

² BDAG, s.v. “εὐσέβεια,” 412.

acknowledging His existence. Our default is to roll out of bed and to immediately think about *our* plans, and *our* wants, and *our* needs.

To be godly, then, is to live a life that is appropriately affected by the *gravity* of God – a life that gives evidence to the fact that there is a God and that He deserves your attention and allegiance. To be godly is to be obedient to His commands. To be godly is to worship God for who He has revealed Himself to be. To be godly is to be more concerned with eternal realities than you are with the present. To be godly is to seek first HIS kingdom and HIS righteousness.

But godliness does not come naturally to us. Therefore, we need to TRAIN ourselves in it. That’s what this passage is about.

And that immediately presents us with a problem: Training is hard! It would be much easier to live my life with lesser ambitions – to live with the goal of making lots of money so that I can eat, drink and be as merry as possible before I die. That’s an easy, comfortable goal. That’s why so many people pursue it! Why, then, should I apply myself to something so difficult – something so *unnatural*? Why should I train myself for godliness?

Why Should I Train Myself For Godliness?

First, you should train yourself in godliness:

1. So that you can be used to equip others

Look again at verse 6:

If you **put these things before the brothers**, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. (1 Timothy 4:6 ESV)

Timothy was to put “these things” – likely referring to the doctrine being described in the letter – before the brothers. Meaning – Timothy’s responsibility was to discern the teaching and then to share it with his fellow Christians. A good servant of Jesus Christ learns and then shares. That’s the recipe. Robert Murray McCheyne applies this principle to pastors:

Oh, brethren, this is our great work! It is well to visit the sick, and well to educate children and clothe the naked. It is well to attend presbyteries. It is well to write books or read them. But here is the main thing: preach the Word.³

Preach the word! Put these things before the brothers and sisters. Equip the saints for the work of ministry.

And this isn't simply the calling of church leaders. This is also the job of Christian friends and mentors. You should be spending time in the word so that you can share the things that God is teaching you. You should be equipping yourself so that you can give good biblical counsel when your friends need it.

This is also the job of parents. That's what we've been hammering home with the Life Together program. Leading a family devotion isn't rocket science. It just looks like reading the Bible and sharing with the family what you've learned. John Calvin famously used the gross-but-helpful analogy of a mother bird chewing up the worm and then spitting it into the mouths of her chicks.

But if you're not "being trained" as Paul says here – if you're neglecting the input – then you won't have anything to share with others.

You can't teach something that you haven't learned.

You can't lead someone to a place that you've never been.

Therefore, you need to train yourself for godliness so that you can equip others.

Second, you should train yourself for godliness:

2. So that you can enjoy the blessings of obedience

³ Robert Murray McCheyne as quoted in Warren Wiersbe, *Treasury of the World's Great Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1979), 382.

Look again at verses 7-9:

Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as **it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.** ⁹ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. (1 Timothy 4:7b-9 ESV)

Paul uses athletic imagery here to make his point. He reminds Timothy that bodily training is of some value. There's a reason why we subject ourselves to gruelling hours of weight-lifting and running and biking. We do it because it helps us to stay healthy. We do it because it lengthens our lifespan. We do it because it keeps us strong. Physical training is hard, but we do it because we see the present value in it.

And that's fine, Paul says. There's some value in physical training.

But training in godliness offers so much more value!

First of all, training in godliness offers value in THIS life. We don't always talk about this because we don't want to sound like we're preaching the prosperity gospel, but following God's instructions does *generally* lead to a better life now. When we live God's way, we *generally* enjoy better friendships, and better marriages, and a better life. That's why the book of Proverbs exists.

God's wisdom is GOOD for us. His plan for our finances is better. His plan for our family life is better. His plan for our work habits is better. Godliness benefits our lives TODAY!

By the way, Jesus said this! In Mark chapter 10 we read:

“Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, ³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold **now in this time**, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. (Mark 10:29-30 ESV)

The Christian hope is rooted in the future. Absolutely. Our kingdom is not of this world and we should never lose sight of that.

But – and this is a piece that we neglect at times – BUT there is also blessing for us in the present!

Now, to be clear, our present hope includes persecutions – Jesus says that here – but it still sounds glorious! As we train ourselves in godliness, even though we pay a great cost as we part with our former way of life, what we gain is 100 times better!

There is benefit for us now!

But all that being said, it is the ETERNAL reward that should really fuel our training in godliness. It is the eternal reward that really distinguishes training in godliness from physical training. The hours that you spent at the gym were good in that they gave you some temporary benefits, but no one in heaven will care how much you were able to deadlift. In heaven, the greatest rewards are reserved for those who busied themselves with the Master's work. Jesus taught us:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. (Matthew 6:19-20
ESV)

What is this treasure that Jesus is referring to?

Some argue that he is referring to degrees of rewards in heaven. That is certainly possible, but I would suggest that Jesus is referring to an even greater reality. I believe that Jesus is referring to the treasure of the eternal souls that we lead to Christ in our earthly lives.

Think about that for a moment. Have you ever led someone to Christ? Have you ever watched as their eyes opened wide and as they understood for the first time the magnitude and the glory of the gospel? There is nothing like it! And that joy of leading someone to Christ pales in comparison to the joy that we will feel when we see that brother or that sister in heaven!

Let me ask you this morning: Do you have any treasure in heaven?

Devote your life to something that will last FOREVER!

And that leads us to consider Paul's next argument. You should train yourself for godliness:

3. So that you can be effective in God's rescue mission

One of Paul's primary concerns in this letter has been to expose how the foolishness of the false teachers in Ephesus has distracted from the declaration of the gospel. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, but the church had become so worldly and so distracted by myths and silliness that they were turning away unbelievers rather than inviting them in.

Therefore, Paul is calling Timothy to train himself for godliness so that he can be effective in God's rescue mission! Look at verse 10:

For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. (1 Timothy 4:10 ESV)

Now, the wording of verse 10 has caused some confusion over the ages. At first glance, it almost looks like Paul is saying that the whole world will be saved. But that is the heresy of universalism, and it contradicts the clear testimony of Scripture – including Paul's statements about salvation in his other letters. So that's not how we are meant to read this. What then is he saying here?

The best explanation I have found and the one that best matches Paul's argument throughout the letter is that using the language of "all people" to rebuke the particular problem in Ephesus. The Ephesian heresy had led the church to have an introverted, elitist focus – a focus that kept them from sharing the gospel with the lost. This letter consistently reminds Timothy that the message of the gospel is to be declared indiscriminately to ALL people! Because God is not only the Saviour of the Ephesian church. He is the Saviour of ALL people! Especially – or particularly – those who believe.

THIS is the end for which Paul is toiling and striving! That people of all nations would be brought into the kingdom of Heaven! His hope is on the Living God – the Saviour of the WORLD! Paul toils and strives and trains himself in godliness because He knows that God's salvation will stretch to every people, tribe, tongue and nation. Paul toils and strives because he can look forward with

anticipation to the day when he will stand in glory and see all of the men and women who came to a knowledge of salvation through his sharing of the gospel.

Therefore, not only should you train for godliness so that you can equip and encourage your brothers and sisters in Christ, and not only should you train for godliness so that you can enjoy the blessings of obedience, but you should train yourself in godliness so that you can be effective in God's rescue mission.

So, with the time that we have left, I want to ask one last question: How do we do it? How do I train myself for godliness?

How Do I Train Myself For Godliness?

This won't be an exhaustive list, but Paul points out two ways in which we can start this training. We find the first lesson in verse 6:

If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. (1 Timothy 4:6 ESV)

Paul teaches us here that we train ourselves in godliness:

1. By listening to the right instructor

As we have already seen a number of times in this letter, if you want to be useful for the work of ministry then you need to be selective with your input. You need to be trained in the words of faith and in the good doctrine. That is to say, you need to study God's word, and you need to listen to those who rightly handle God's truth. You need to put good things IN.

We touched on this last week, but I'll say it again. Brothers and sisters, we need to be Bible readers in this place! In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he writes:

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, **equipped for every good work.** (2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV)

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for parenting. Moms and dads, what well are you drawing from when you give wisdom to your kids? Spend time each day in God's word so that from the overflow of your heart your mouth will speak helpful, godly wisdom.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for friendship. Mental health is rampant in our culture. Many of your friends are hurting more than they ever have in their lifetime. Start your morning in quiet time with the Lord. Get His truth into you, so that you can share it with everyone who crosses your path.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for evangelism. Your coworkers have questions. Your neighbors have doubts. Your in-laws have objections. The man on the street has sorrows. The answers for all of these circumstances are found in the Word. Brothers and sisters, get it into you. Train yourself in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable – so get all Scripture into you! Read it. Memorize it. Meditate on it. Talk about it with your spouse or with your friends. If we want to train ourselves in godliness than we need to go right to the source. We need to listen to the right instructor.

And that leads naturally to Paul's second lesson which we find in the very next verse. Paul goes on to say in verse 7:

Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. (1 Timothy 4:7a ESV)

Here we learn that we grow in godliness:

2. By shunning every distraction

Refuse to give an ear to those who pull you into speculation and nonsense.

Every generation has its own iteration of silliness. Paul first addressed this Ephesian brand of nonsense in chapter 1. It appears that there were teachers in Ephesus who were using the biblical genealogies to draw false and dangerous conclusions. They were speculating about who the “true people of God” were and this was leading to a heretical idea that the gospel was only for a select group of people. This is why so much of the letter is devoted to the truth that the gospel is for *all* people.

This novelty – this nonsense – had effectively distracted the Ephesian church from the mission.

They should have been going into the world and making disciples, but instead they were sitting in their basements using their fancy decoder rings to study Genesis.

Here’s the lesson for us: If we listen to the wrong voices for long enough, we can lose the gospel entirely! If you put junk in, then junk will come out. Think about that! When you are binge watching those clips on YouTube, you’re not only hurting yourself – you’re rendering yourself useless for all of the people who are going to be looking to you for help. The junk that goes in is going to come out.

By way of example, an athlete in training understands that input matters. If you’re trying to prepare for an Olympic event, you’re going to fuel yourself with things like chicken breasts, vegetables, and protein. I can’t prove this claim, but I am 99% positive that Simone Biles didn’t make a habit of eating ice cream and potato chips in her days of training. She was a disciplined athlete, and she had a goal: To be the best gymnast in the world! Therefore, she wasn’t going to put ANYTHING into her body unless it furthered her driving ambition.

What is your driving ambition?

Is it godliness? Is it your ambition to take this short life that you’ve been entrusted with and to maximize it for the glory of God? Is it your ambition to live and speak in such a way that many people are rescued from the fire and brought into the kingdom of God? If that is your ambition – and God’s word teaches us here that it *should* be – then you need to fuel yourself accordingly. You need to get the right things into you, and you need to cut out the distractions that are keeping you off of the mission.

Conclusion

And this brings us back full circle to the illustration that we started with this morning.

300,000 allied soldiers were trapped on the beach of Dunkirk and life and death hung in the balance. It is not a stretch to suggest that Hitler would have won the war were it not for the successful rescue accomplished by the ordinary citizens of Great Britain.

But they WERE rescued! And that rescue was made possible by ordinary men and women who understood that something needed to be done and who were willing to step up to the assignment.

Well, brothers and sisters, you have also been given an assignment. In Matthew 28, Jesus said:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ **Go** therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18b-20 ESV)

Do you know what that is? That’s a call for “Operation Dynamo”! That is Jesus – the one who purchased your life with his own blood – using his final words on earth to call you to ACTION! He’s calling you to mobilize for this global rescue mission!

Think about this: There are 300,000 men, women, boys and girls within a 20-mile radius of us today who are trapped, lost, and hopeless.

And if something doesn’t change, they will die.

Thousands of them live in your city. Hundreds of them live on your street. A few of them might even live in your own house.

Don’t sit on the sidelines any longer. Don’t allow yourself to waste this life sitting on the couch trying to avoid every discomfort. For the glory of God and for the salvation of the world give yourself to something worth pursuing!

Train yourself in godliness. And then watch what God will do.

You're no civilian. You have been called to action by the King of Kings! So, grab whatever will float, and join this rescue mission.

Let's pray together.