

“Spiritual Habits”
1 Timothy 4:6-11
Sermon Series: “Habits”

Introduction:

Notice how various translations render this phrase in verse 7:

Keep yourself in training for a godly life. (GNT)

Exercise yourself toward godliness. (NKJV)

Exercise daily in God-no Spiritual flabbiness, please! (MSG)

Train yourself for godliness. (NET Bible)

Train yourself to be godly. (NIV)

Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness. (NLT)

Take the time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit. (Phillips)

The word “train” comes from the Greek word *gumnazo*. We get our English word, “gymnasium,” from it. It was literally speaking of the Greek athletes training wholeheartedly in gyms in preparation for their athletic contests. Physically speaking, the key to being in good shape is *diet* and *exercise*, and Paul is saying to us that the same thing is true spiritually. In the first part of the verse, he tells us that we are to have a spiritual diet of God’s Word instead of human myths and then he commands us to exercise ourselves spiritually. *Diet* and *exercise* are crucial to our spiritual health as well.

Main Idea: We are to discipline ourselves spiritually in order to grow in godliness.

1. The purpose of practicing spiritual disciplines is growing to become like Jesus Christ. Spiritual disciplines are not an end in themselves. They are a means to an end. We are not holy simply because we read our Bibles, say a prayer, etc. We are not to do these things so God will bless us. That is works-based legalism instead of grace. The goal is godliness, which is becoming like Christ. **The difference in legalism and godly discipline is legalism says we do these spiritual exercises so that God will be pleased with us, but godly discipline is motivated by knowing that God is pleased with me in Jesus so I want to honor and know Him better because He loves me.** That is God’s ultimate goal for our lives. Romans 8:29 says, “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Spiritual disciplines are a means that enable us to grow to become more like Jesus. Look at what we learn from the preceding verses in 1 Timothy 3:16-4:5:

A. The essence of godliness is Jesus (3:16).

B. The example for godliness is Jesus (3:16).

C. The empowering for godliness is Jesus (3:16).

D. In other words godliness is in a Person, and it is a serious error to think that godliness is achieved through outward conformity to man-made standards (4:1-5).

2. The practice of spiritual disciplines is necessary because spiritual growth will not happen without practicing them. Spiritual growth is not an automatic, instantaneous, one-time experience. It does not come from going to a particular conference, revival, or listening to a certain preacher. It is, on the other hand, a life-long process of dying to self, spending time with God, obeying Him, walking in the Spirit, etc.

3. The reward of practicing spiritual disciplines is blessing now and for eternity.

Verse 8 tells us that bodily exercise is of some value. It is good for us right now. It makes us feel better. It may lead to a longer life. However, it won't last forever. Physical exercise is a good thing, but verse 8 goes on to tell us that spiritual exercise is a better thing. Verse 8 says, "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." Spiritual discipline that leads to godliness will result in an eternal reward for us as our lives please God. It will also benefit us right now (cue, craving, response, **reward**) because spending time with God results in:

- A. Personal knowledge of God:** Hosea 4:6a says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."
- B. Personal Growth:** 2 Peter 3:18 says, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."
- C. Protection from God:** Psalm 91:1 says, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."
- D. Personal Peace:** Isaiah 26:3 says, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because He trusts in You."
- E. Proper Perspective on Difficult Times:** Psalm 73:16-17 says, "When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me-until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end."
- F. Production of Spiritual Fruit:** John 15:5 says, "I am the vine, you are the branches, he who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

4. The means of practicing spiritual disciplines include:

- A. Bible Intake (Reading, Study, Listening to Teaching/Preaching, Meditation, Memorization, Application)**
- B. Prayer**
- C. Personal Worship (music, praise, thanksgiving)**
- D. Confession of sin (1 John 1:9)**

E. Daily considering ourselves to be dead to sin and alive in Christ and surrendering to Him (Romans 6:11-13)

These are ways to connect with God and become more like Christ. However, it is not enough to take in, but we also give out through obedience, service, witnessing etc.

Conclusion:

1. Are you trusting Jesus alone and not your religious efforts for your salvation?

2. Are you disciplining yourself for the purpose of godliness?

Why should you?

-Obedience

-To become like Jesus

-For the spiritual benefits

-To honor Jesus: He deserves our first and best (“the principle of the first,” Colossians 1:18, Malachi 1:6-14 {analogy of strawberry cake as a gift})

1. God’s Kingdom as our first priority (Matthew 6:33)
2. Jesus as our first love (Revelation 2:4)
3. Giving God the first and best of our week in worship (Hebrews 10:25)
4. Giving God first place in our day (Mark 1:35)
5. Giving God the first and best of our financial blessings (Proverbs 3:9)