**Training Yourself in Godliness**

**Passage: 1 Timothy 4:1-10**

**Main Point: The gospel calls for training in godliness not bodily training**

**FCF: Why is exercising bodily discipline not enough to be considered godly?**

1. Introduction
   1. Introduce self/background
      1. Hi—As Pastor Jason said, for those of you who don’t know me, I’m Daniel, and I’ve been the youth intern here for almost a year. Don’t feel guilty if you didn’t know that, as even some of our youth still aren’t exactly sure what I do at church.
      2. Just some background about myself, I was born in Louisiana, grew up in Dallas, and came to Houston for college. Throughout my time here I’ve been given opportunities that I never thought I would ever do, from giving talks in CCF over the summer, to being a youth intern, to now being able to preach God’s word in the big boy and girl service. I realize that this is indeed a huge honor to be at a pulpit to preach, so if you can’t tell I’m incredibly nervous to do so, so both to calm and prepare our hearts together before we dive into God’s Word, let me pray for us.
   2. **PRAY**
      1. Oh God, we praise you because you are a God that gives us your Word
      2. I ask that as broken words come out of my mouth, that they stay true to your word
      3. I ask that we will all be able to hear and apply what your word has to teach us today.
   3. Introduce the passage
      1. American Society judges whether a particular person is considered “good” or worthy of our admiration based off a specific few criteria of what they do or say and those criteria that changes over time, whether its athletes, actors, artists, or politicians, pastors, or pediatricians,
      2. We are willing to ignore parts of their behavior as long as they put a front that is good or respectable or how we want them to behave. For our athletes, if they perform highly in playoff or crunch time games our society and I am willing overreact to their performance, we also have different standards for their behavior based on whether they play for a team that we support
      3. For actors, are their movies worth of watching, they’re not known for sexually abusing others, or for our pastors, do they care about me and preach God’s word well, and that they seem nice and approachable
      4. Whatever profession or group it is, it’s easy to generalize and look at the surface and a person’s specific few actions and say that they are good and worthy of our admiration and respect, while ignoring either the heart or other parts of their behavior
      5. Paul critiques that view and calls the Christian to go against such teaching that establishes what is good is those who follow certain commands that aren’t even in scripture, but instead cause the Christian to focus on a much harder and nebulous concept known as godliness
      6. So today we’ll be studying 1 Timothy 4:1-10 and examining **Why is exercising bodily discipline not enough to be considered godly?** (repeat)
      7. Henry last week covered how the church is to lift high the truth from God’s word, and that passage was used to transition into a section where we see an example of false teaching on how to lift the truth of God higher followed by a section where Paul applies a corrective by turning the eyes of Timothy on how to lift the truth of God higher through godliness.
      8. So for a basic breakdown of the passage, there’s a contrast between those who follow the false teaching in v(1-5) and those who follow the correct teaching in v(6-8)
      9. The main point that I am arguing for today is that “**The gospel calls for training in godliness not bodily training**” REPEAT
      10. Since this book is written to Timothy and to other elders, many might think that this call to godliness is only given to those of authority in the church. But I believe Paul draws a line for all Christians to either pursue God and be His servants and deacons, or be servants and deacons of false doctrine and demons.
      11. So to explore our main point, we are going to first examine what happens when we are legalistic and overvalue bodily discipline, the second how overvaluing bodily discipline leads to an undervaluing of godly discipline, and lastly knowing the gospel leads us to valuing godliness.
2. **Legalism leads to overvaluing bodily discipline (v1-5)**
   1. So first, legalism leads to overvaluing bodily discipline. So we’re going to define a few terms and dive deeper later on.
   2. So what is legalism? Legalism adds additional rules or regulations to make it easier or simpler for Christians to follow🡪 Legalists in the Christian sense often try to lower the standard that God set by making additional rules and exceptions so that they can say that they follow the law wholly.
      1. There are two levels of legalism-
         1. I need to do these laws and rules to be saved
         2. Or the subtler form: I need to follow these additional rules to be more holy or obedient to God. I need to follow these rules outside of the Bible to be a better follower of God.
   3. Bodily training/discipline- I’m going to use these terms interchangeably- it’s just that- it’s placing rules on oneself to better oneself or to prevent sin.
   4. So in verses 1-5 we see that the teaching that Paul is warning against is a form of legalism. This legalism emphasized bodily training/discipline involved enforcing rules such as forbidding marriage and abstaining from certain food.
      1. The second form of legalism, where the idea that we need to follow these extra biblical rules to be holy seems to be the teaching here, where if I keep these rules I’ll be pursuing God better, and not only that, I’ll place my restrictions and rules on others, so that I look more godly, and they have to follow these rules.
   5. This was part of the life of the Ephesian church, they had struggles with their society’s philosophies, specifically with the idea of asceticism
      1. Asceticism is the thought of becoming more spiritual if we abstain from physical things such as food or marriage
      2. Whether it was influenced by Jewish Law or by the Greek philosophies, they believed that if they restricted these things, they would be more holy or good.
   6. Now, Paul goes further to say that the legalists who teach asceticism have devoted themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons. Meaning that they are even deacons and servants of demons instead of Christ, and how the spirit has predicted it.
      1. Jesus in Matthew 7:15 warns against how there will be wolves in sheep’s clothing, meaning that there will be people in the church who aren’t there as real sheep and servants of God, but instead fake ones that have another motive, and as Paul suggests to establish this false doctrine in the church.
   7. Even further, Paul describes that these false teachers are insincere, lie, and their consciences are seared, meaning that because they have taught this false teaching so much, they live out their lies. Seared- possibly means they have been marked or branded like cattle, or possibly they have been seared and anesthetized, they’ve become numb to the sound of their alarm, It’s like that person like me in college who sets an alarm for the morning, and every time the alarm clock rings, he or she just hits the snooze button: soon, the person will become immune to the ringing of the alarm clock, and instead annoy their roommates early in the morning. These teachers consciences were seared, they didn’t even recognize that their teaching was false.
      1. Likewise, the people probably didn’t know it was false either because they heard it so much.
   8. Now, to me and most Christians, it seems valuable to establish additional rules and to become more holy be abstaining for things, it even seems like what the Ephesians aren’t doing is good. Maybe they were restricting marriage because of sexual immorality? Or abstinence of foods to make sure that they were honoring their bodies like a holy temple for God and that they would live longer. They’re just simply setting a higher standard and a better one. What’s wrong with what these teachers are doing?
   9. Paul’s instruction and references provide a clear answer. Paul references the creation story and how everything that God created was to be good—He references Genesis 1:31, which says “God saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good.”, whether it was the food on the earth that he made, or it was marriage he instituted. Paul is arguing that when God created the world there was nothing unclean or evil, but only through sin is there anything unclean. And as people that are made new before God, we can partake in all that God has given us with thanksgiving and prayer.
   10. Furthermore, Paul is reminding the Ephesian believers through the creation story that this idea of adding rules and regulations to God’s commands is the same deceitful spirit that tempted Eve in the garden, when she added the additional rule that she couldn’t even touch the fruit on the try in addition to not eating it, and ultimately she sinned.
   11. What happens when we add these rules is that we are trying to take the place of God by setting the standard of what’s right and wrong, and this teaching is what Paul is arguing vehemently against, because this legalism leads to making ourselves God instead of Him.
   12. A couple caveats before we go how we can see this manifested today
       1. Commands in the Bible versus preferences and thoughts- commands are to follow
       2. Personal conviction🡪 is ok, you can offer it as one, but don’t try to enforce it onto others either as a rule, or as the way to be holy or prescribe to others as how to live, because then you are taking the place of God and making new rules. Not that there aren’t wise boundaries for us to place, but Paul is saying don’t judge or instruct or teach a fellow brother or sister, if they don’t have the same rules as you or the same guidelines as you do, if they’re not falling in sin! Romans 14:3 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.
   13. In our churches today and in the past we can do the same whether spoken or unspoken as the church in Ephesus
       1. The elevation of doing “spiritual” work as the best work in the medieval catholic church where not being a priest or monk meant you weren’t as close to God
       2. Whether it be a ban on dancing or not watching Disney movies in the Baptist church in the last century or today
       3. Going to a bar
       4. Playing video games
       5. Not eating meat
       6. All in all there are plenty of ways that we as Christians place additional rules on ourselves, and then transfer them onto others as a process.
       7. I think this passage convicts people like me who want to put easy to understand rules in place to know exactly how to walk this path, how to be holy and ask God to just give me a list
   14. In the end, this legalism leads to us as a church valuing certain bodily disciplines where if we see someone doing a specific action we automatically say “o that person is holy because he/she doesn’t do that but does do this”
       1. Maybe in our church it may be a small group leader or going on a mission trip or works out a ton and is super buff.
       2. And he doesn’t drink any alcohol- now I don’t know what the lines are for each of us in our heads but we do need to ask ourselves and our church whether we overvalue these bodily disciplines
   15. So as a church let us not let legalism cause us to overvalue our bodily discipline and training.
3. Overvaluing bodily discipline leads to undervaluing godliness (v6-8)
   1. Legalism doesn’t just lead to overvaluing bodily discipline, it eventually leads us to undervalue godliness. Because if we are to focused on a few characteristics or behaviors, we ignore the greater view of godliness. We can see this in verses 6-8
   2. Here, Paul is encouraging Timothy to teach all the things that Paul has commanded Timothy to teach the Ephesian believers, how the church should be organized and what dangers to look out for, and ultimately reminding Timothy that he is a servant of Christ which is a contrast to the part before and instructs Timothy how to rebuke the false teaching and what to teach and train instead.
   3. Paul tells Timothy to be trained in words of faith and good doctrine
      1. Words of faith meaning the gospel message,
      2. Good doctrine meaning what is true and right about God and His character and ourselves
      3. And this means rejecting the silly myths- whether they be legalistic tendencies, or just things that didn’t matter to the doctrine of God or the gospel message.
      4. Commentators note that apparently false teaching was so inexact and fuzzy and random that Paul simply dismisses it as such, because they don’t take a real stance and he doesn’t seem to think it’s worth addressing.
   4. And now we are in the juicy section of this passage where there is a call for Timothy and for us to “train yourself in godliness”- We will look at both words and then together.
      1. Training: the word being used implies this idea of physical exercise, so Paul is drawing a comparison to physical training to godly training
      2. 2nd the idea of godliness is tricky. What does godliness mean? I spent much time trying to think and read and pray about what Godliness means
         1. But in the end I got this definition: **becoming more like God specifically his character**
            1. **Character being: holiness, loving, justice, mercy, grace, missional, etc.**
         2. The root of the word godliness refers to awe and reverence of God- to grow in godliness means becoming a person whose worship resembles that awe and life of active obedience that we have of God
      3. So, what does training in godliness look like? This is a question that I’ve struggled with for a long time- but some examples include
         1. Character modeling- training to be more like God in character
         2. Prayer- God centered conversation 🡪 balanced training in the end
         3. Uncomfortable situations with people
         4. Studying God’s word and faithful doctrine
         5. Repenting
         6. Discipleship
         7. Now I’m not going to go into all the ways to train yourself in godliness or prescribe a plan for you, because that’s what Paul is warning against in the previous section, but
      4. Some points of emphasis on training in godliness:
         1. Effort and pain. It isn’t passive or even normal-Just like physical exercise it is hard. You have to push yourself into a situation where you’re not comfortable
         2. Second, godly training is balanced. This means you do multiple types of training and don’t only just do one. It may seem not too bad if you only do the things that we like- for example if you’re Pastor Jason and you really love learning theology or if you really like discipleship and sharing the gospel, that’s all you’ll do
            1. But, like any training, it needs to be comprehensive🡪 now I’m no workout man like Eun Soo, in fact it’s always been hard for me to work out consistently, but from the one summer I tried to do it after my sophomore year of college, I learned that you needed to work out different parts of the body, so that you can look balanced and not like a chicken with a huge upper body and tiny legs. Or if you’re one of those big guys (like me) and don’t do your cardio, and after a couple trips up and down the basketball court and get winded and would collapse
            2. Furthermore the gymnasium in Paul’s day had multiple parts and purposes one obviously was for exercise where there were various weights,

there were also often baths attached to the gymnasiums, because they didn’t have personal restrooms, people would go to the baths to get cleaned

Also there were often intellectual pursuits that took place at the gymnasium as well.

* + 1. In the end training in godliness may be tiresome and overwhelming, but it’s something that is worth pursuing.
  1. In the next section, Paul is arguing that the training in godliness that we do is more important than bodily training that he describes previously.
  2. Paul makes 2 important points here: 1. Bodily training isn’t without value 2. Godly training is more important
     1. First bodily training isn’t without value. One may be tempted to say that Paul is stating that establishing different rules or regulations or exercises to prevent sin or be more like God aren’t helpful at all. But Paul says that it does have value of preventing sin and even the restraint from certain things that God created can be good,
     2. Second, Godly training is more important: Because it lasts forever. Rules that you set may be broken, things you do now for your body will disappear when you die, but godliness lasts beyond the grave in the new bodies that we receive and holds eternal value, because as Christians, we are called to resemble the character of our creator. That is a promise we can count on
  3. So in the end when we overvalue bodily training we forget that training in godliness had greater value and we lose sight of that.

1. **Knowing the gospel leads to valuing godliness. v(9-10)**
   1. So, we see what happens when we overvalue bodily training, and undervalue godliness, now, how knowing the gospel leads to valuing godliness.
   2. Verse 9 offers a promise that “the saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance”
      1. I am of the opinion that verse 9 refers to verse 10, because of Chapter 1:15 where there is a similar structure, and even the contexts of the two promises are similar, although it could also go with verse 8.
      2. But in the end it doesn’t particularly matter because both are helpful sayings and trustworthy because they are in the word of God.
   3. So what is the statement that is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance?
      1. That we pursue godliness because our hope is on God
      2. And why should we put our hope in God? Because He is the savior of all people especially of those who believe.
   4. The verse says that we toil and strive for godliness, further emphasizing this is something that we have to work hard for🡪 that it isn’t something that’s easy
      1. It also promises that we toil and strive for the gospel message both in ourselves and in others.
   5. So, what is this gospel message?
      1. Paul explains it by saying it in 3 parts.
         1. Living God
            1. That means we have hope that God is real living, and he is and was and always will be at work in our world
         2. Savior of all people
            1. This means that God came down as Jesus to save us from our sin, which deserved God’s punishment for sin, and he died for our sins, but didn’t stay did, since He is living he rose again
            2. he also didn’t just come to save one nation or group of people, but came for all types of people and nations.
         3. Hope….Especially of those who believe
            1. And whoever believes this truth, and puts their hope in it by making Jesus their Lord will be saved from eternal separation from God.
      2. All in all, with the hope of the gospel, we are able to pursue godliness holy, we are able to train ourselves this way, because we know who this God is. Without the gospel, we wouldn’t have knowledge of God, we could strive all we want to be more “godly” or “good”, but never do so. So friends, if you haven’t accepted Jesus as your savior, hope, and Lord, there’s no point in you trying to train in godliness, unfortunately, you’ll just be one of those false teachers that Paul describes, because we’ll just be establishing arbitrary rules and making ourselves God.
      3. And for my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ- let us remember how and why we toil and strive for godliness, it’s because of what Christ has done for us.
2. Conclusion
   1. In conclusion, I know I haven’t provided many specifics of what godliness looks like, so I encourage you to just read this book, and ask God to reveal it to you. that we may as a church be known for our godliness because of what the gospel has done for us.
      1. **Remember: The gospel calls for godliness not bodily discipline**
   2. I’ll just close with a simple sports story
      1. If you know me well at all, I’m a pretty big Dallas sports fan. One moment that I distinctly remember was the summer after my 10th grade year, and the Dallas Mavericks were in the playoffs. After experiencing year after year of disappointment in the playoffs, I wasn’t very hopeful, there were the 2X defending champion Lakers, there was the young upstart team in OKC, there was the recently formed superteam in Miami with Lebron, Wade, and Bosh—what’s the point? All Dallas had was this German named Dirk. He’s already been in the league for 13 seasons with no championship to speak of. If I were a part of the team, I would’ve given up. Called it quits. Just use the time to focus on other things whether it be commercials, friends, fancy cars, great vacations, staying healthy, who cares about the championship. Likewise for us as Christians, we may often think is it worth it to train in godliness, might as well train in something else. Fortunately, that team was not as fatalistic as me, and overcame all the teams and won the championship resoundingly, proving all the analysts wrong, that we could take home the Larry O’Brien trophy and prove that all the training wasn’t for naught. Fortunately for us, unlike NBA players or Dirk Nowitzki, we don’t have to be unsure if we’ll get the championship, God has already won it for us. He guarantees it to us as we train in godliness. May we as Christians train for godliness as our goal. The time is now.
      2. Let’s pray
   3. So to close, a few questions to think about focused on each point:
      1. Am I enforcing rules upon others that aren’t in scripture, because I think it’s important?
      2. Am I striving and toiling in my training for godliness?
      3. Am I a person who trusts this gospel message so that I can live a life that is godly?

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, **2**through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,**3**who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. **4**For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, **5**for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

**6**If you put these things before the brothers,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Timothy+4&version=ESV#fen-ESV-29737a)] 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,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Timothy+4&version=ESV#fen-ESV-29741b)] because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.