

**ETHAN TEMPLE MINISTRIES TOOLS FOR
LIFE
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Training Ourselves in Godliness.

Scripture: 1 Timothy 4:7-8

Have nothing to do with profane myths and old wives' tales. Train yourself in godliness, for, while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. (NRSV)

The Concerning Situation

The Christian Journey is a fulfilling experience that if followed correctly grows us from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18). Yet, there are many, too many professed believers who claim nothing more than a surface level Christianity. It is far too common to find any number of devotional thoughts, inspiring sermons, and motivational ministries that are nothing more than some nonsense masquerading as the gospel. It is unfortunate that many Christian circles are rife with conspiracies, manipulation, and outright confusion.

This is nothing new. This problem of individuals twisting the truth and exchanging it for lies has been ongoing throughout history (Romans 1:25) and scripture warns us plainly that as the end draws nearer and nearer "distressing times will come" (2 Timothy 3:1) This is due in part to our human nature, asserting ourselves over everything. (2 Peter 2:10-14)

The Biblical Solution

Yet, thank God that he has provided a means of overcoming the twistedness of this fallen world. Paul states plainly that we ought to "train ourselves in godliness". Paul writes to his son in the faith, Timothy, to counsel him and encourage him in ministry. Through his letters it becomes clear that Paul urges

Timothy to grow in godliness and to likewise cultivate godliness in his congregations.

Now, while scripture provides a clear solution, years of religious rhetoric often times muddles the truths of scripture. That is to say, we all know we should grow in godliness, but we've said it so often that it's become cliché and we have lost the appreciation of what it actually means to train ourselves in godliness. One might begin by asking what is godliness or how exactly do we train ourselves?

First, we out to recognize that word: **Train** (γυμνάζω/gymnázō). Paul compares training in godliness with physical training and proclaims that godliness is of greater value. Paul clearly is referencing the life of an athlete as a model of how one ought to cultivate godliness. No one would expect an athlete to compete in a marathon without practicing for months. One doesn't just step on the court and play at the same level as NBA teams. It is impossible for someone to swim in the Olympics if they've never set foot in a pool before. In other words, godliness requires a little work.

Now many Christians dislike the idea of work in relation to the spiritual life. While work has no role in our salvation, we are saved by grace alone (Ephesians 2:8-9), it does have an immense role in developing spiritual maturity. An individual who refuses to mature may unfortunately lose their salvation being swept about by every false doctrine – Ephesians 4:11-14. Now while exercise and training is hard it is rewarding.

1 Timothy 4: 9-10

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance. 10 For to this end we toil and struggle, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, especially of those who believe.

Secondly, Paul also makes it evident that we do not train alone nor are we left without any equipment. Paul continues to tell Timothy plainly the way to train his congregation.

1 Timothy 4:13,15,16

Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching... Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Lastly, Paul makes it clear that believers ought to train ourselves, and that we do so through study of the truths of God, but the most crucial point is once again all of this is, so we grow in godliness. Thus, it's important to appreciate what godliness is. And while there are numerous ways to define godliness, there is perhaps none better than Paul's:

1 Timothy 3:16 – Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.

If Paul's poetic style causes some uncertainty, that's alright, he does call it a mystery in the first place. But to state it simply Christ is godliness – To use another author's words "Jesus is the essence and wellspring of godliness". When you think of what godliness is, your first thoughts should be of Christ. Christ is the very definition of godliness. Paul urges Timothy to train himself in godliness, that is to grow in Christ! May we all do the same.