



**“Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (I Timothy 4:8).**

## **Godly Exercise**

**Central Truth:** God-directed activities promote spiritual health.

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**Topic:** Godliness; Righteousness: Of Believers.

*“Giving all diligence, add . . . godliness” (II Peter 1:5, 6).*

Godliness is godlikeness. To add the virtue of godliness to your life means to become more like God in your attitudes and your actions. What a challenge! What a privilege!

Godlikeness was implanted in us at conversion. When we were saved from our sins we became children of God and received the divine nature (II Peter 1:4). Since that moment, God himself has lived His life in us. Yes, the life of God is lived in our mortal bodies; the life of eternity is lived here in time. And that is true of every Christian.

A godly life is not easy in a sinful world. Therefore, the Christian must be very diligent. He must *“work out”* (give practical application to what God has implanted within) his salvation with great reverence and diligence (Philippians 2:12). The world will counter the desire and effort toward godliness, for it is ungodly. But victory is possible. *“Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”* (I John 4:4).

Apply this study personally. Aim for godliness.

### **I. THE ENEMY OF GODLINESS (I Timothy 4:7)**

The world of mankind, the unregenerate society of which Satan is the god, is in rebellion against God. Therefore, it is the enemy of anyone who would be godly. Two things mark the spiritual bankruptcy of any system,

which rejects God: (1) the presence of the profane and (2) the absence of godly exercise.

The presence of the profane is described by Paul as "profane and old wives' fables." They are profane in that there is nothing sacred about them. They are old wives' fables in that they are fit only for senile, childish crones to while away their time over. They fall far short of the good, health-giving doctrines of Christ.

Such futile and spiritually profitless discussions are to be "shunned" (refused, rejected) by every Christian. To discuss them seriously would give them a dignity which they do not deserve. The Christian has something better to do.

He can discipline and continually train himself for the practice of godliness. Godliness will express itself in an active and positive piety which seeks personal holiness because of devotion to God. As the athlete disciplines his body with rigorous and strenuous exercise, so the Christian disciplines himself to godliness.

## **II. THE PROFIT OF GODLINESS (I Timothy 4:8)**

We hear a lot these days about physical fitness. Many people vigorously pursue walking, running, swimming, and some types of non-contact sports. Such activity has some value. It makes a person feel better, helps him ward off certain illnesses, and improves his personal appearance. But however important that exercise may be, there is something which is far superior.

"Bodily exercise is of benefit in some areas," Paul writes, "but godliness is beneficial in everything." It contributes to the physical, spiritual, temporal, and eternal well being of the person who lives godly.

Physical exercise profits a person for this life only. Godliness benefits a person in this life and in the future life also. Physical exercise profits the body only. Spiritual living profits the body plus the soul and the spirit. The life which is lived according to the standard of the Word of God is successful.

Do you spend as much time each day in spiritual exercises as in physical? There is no reason to neglect one to engage in the other. Do both. It will benefit you in time and eternity. Set your daily discipline to include those blessed exercises.

One day each child of God will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged for his works. He will account to God for what he has done, whether it is good or bad. The-Lord will reward him for his good works, but

the believer will suffer loss for those that are bad. Oh, to have a large store of godly deeds for our Lord's review! "*If any man's work abide . . . , he shall receive a reward*" (1 Corinthians 3:14).

There are rewards ahead, thank God. But even if there were not, the blessings of living a godly life are sufficient reward in this world to recommend that lifestyle to all.

### III. THE CHALLENGE OF GODLINESS (I Timothy 4:9-11)

**A. Godliness challenges us to labor** (verse 10). To "*labour*" means to work to the point of utter weariness and complete exhaustion. It is much stronger than the verb "to work." As the runner uses every ounce of his energy in the race and has difficulty standing when the race is done, so the Christian devotes all he is and has to godliness. No labor is too demanding and no pain is too severe if godly living results. That is how important godliness is.

**B. Godliness challenges us to "*suffer reproach*"** (verse 10). That term might be translated "strive" or "struggle." It might also be translated "agonize." It suggests giving one's energy into godliness until even the reserve strength seems to be depleted. Evidently, it is not easy to live a godly life in an ungodly world. It will cost you to follow Jesus.

**C. Godliness challenges us to trust God** (verse 10). A confident assurance of the reality of things we do not see is the only basis for paying the price for godly living. Our only explanation for self-discipline and godliness is that "*we trust in the living God.*" The form of the verb indicates a continuous state of hope which has been permanently set on the living God. The foundation of our hope (the future tense of faith) is God himself, the true and living God. He who is the Savior of each of us who believe can be trusted safely.

**D. Godliness challenges us to influence others** (verse 11). The principles of holy living must be implanted in the mind and set forth as authoritative principles of living. Moral and spiritual principles must never become commonplace to Christians. They must be received, obeyed, and passed on to other believers. Continued teaching of the Word of God will safeguard believers in Jesus from false teachers, false doctrines, and false standards of living.

### IV. THE SCOPE OF GODLINESS (I Timothy 4:12)

*"Let no man despise thy youth."* That indicates a problem which

Timothy faced for years in his ministry. He was probably between thirty and forty years old when this was written. But a man was called a “youth” up to the age of forty in those days. Timothy had to be the leader of men who were twice his age. It would be easy for him to be intimidated, particularly since he tended to be introverted anyway. People might “*despise*” him by feeling a contempt toward him and rejecting his leadership simply because he was not an older man. Paul wrote, “That must not happen. There is something you can do to keep it from happening.

“*Be thou an example of the believers.*” That would silence every adverse reaction about his youth. The command was not that Timothy be an example to believers, but he was to be an example of what an ideal believer is like. A day-by-day lifestyle that displayed an unblemished Christian character would silence the detractors and strengthen Timothy's ministry.

There are six areas which indicate that a person is truly a Christian. Two have to do with what he does, and four have to do with what he is. They are listed in I Timothy 4:12.

In personal relations, the Christian is to be an example “*in word,*” that is, in what he says. James 3 teaches that the tongue is the last citadel of Satan to fall to the forces of divine grace. The person who tames his tongue is truly mature. Therefore, one should show himself to be a Christian by his words.

The Christian is to be an example in his lifestyle, the whole tenor of his life. He is to react to life's affairs as Christ himself would react. That way he will be an example of what a Christian truly is and will gain the respect of others.

In his inner spirit, the Christian has four areas in which to show Christ living within: “*charity* (love),” “*spirit,*” “*faith,*” “*and*” “*purity.*”

“*Charity* (love)” is the motivating power of the Christian life. It is received from God when the Holy Spirit places it within the new convert. It is to be developed and extended toward God and other people. It is so different from mere human affection that its presence and ministry will be a vibrant testimony for Jesus.

“*Spirit*” relates to one's whole outlook on life. One can be optimistic or pessimistic, cynical or trustful, condemning or encouraging. God's living within makes a difference in one's spirit. Showing the spirit of Christ is an excellent testimony for Christ and the occasion of gaining respect in Christian circles.

“*Faith*” is quiet confidence in God. It might be used here in the active sense of trust in God or in the passive sense of fidelity or trustworthiness. Trust in God produces trustworthiness in the believer. “Show people by

example what a life of faith is like in daily affairs,” Paul admonished. “Then they will respect you as a man of God.”

“*Purity*” includes personal chastity, but the emphasis here is on pure intent and sincere character. Paul continued, “Have no hidden motives or secret purposes, Timothy. Be open and honest with all. And people will respect you as a man of God.”

## **V. THE ENEMY OF GODLINESS (I Timothy 6:6-10)**

**A. Discontent is the enemy of godliness** (verses 6-8). Some promote godliness as the way to increase earthly wealth, and there is a sense in which that might be true. But one should live godly whether or not he gets anything of profit from it. The real gain which godliness brings is a spirit of contentment. Contentment plus godliness is great wealth to gain. But woe to the person who has the materialistic view of the value of godly living. He is no better than those who sell indulgences to sin. It is enough that we have the necessities of life. Discontent with God's daily provision is an enemy of godliness.

**B. Materialism is the enemy of godliness** (verse 9). People who are willfully determined to be wealthy expose themselves to temptations and snares, a most dangerous position. God requires that the pastor not be a lover of money (I Timothy 3:3) because such a spirit strangles true godly living.

**C. Covetousness is the enemy of godliness** (verse 10). That is an envious spirit against those who have accumulated worldly goods. Out of a love for money grow all kinds of evil. Seven of them are listed here: temptation, a snare, foolish and hurtful lusts, destruction, perdition, erring from the faith, and a piercing through with many sorrows. Wealth is not worth that price, is it?

## **VI. THE COMPANIONS OF GODLINESS (I Timothy 6:11)**

The godly person will have to flee continually from what Satan puts in his path. He will have to continue to run from evil all his life.

The godly person will have the resolve to pursue. He will pursue “*righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience*” (and) *meekness*.” Each of those six graces is at the heart of godly living. They can and must be cultivated in practical terms in daily life.

How can you cultivate godlikeness? The first step is desire: “*Hunger and thirst after righteousness*”(Matthew 5:6). Ask of each decision, “What would Jesus do?” Cultivate a desire and a discipline to be like Jesus in

attitude and act. Remember, “*godliness is profitable unto all things*” (I Timothy 4:8).

### **Questions for discussion**

1. What is godliness?
2. What is the key to godliness in your life?
3. What are the enemies of godliness in 1 Timothy 4:7?
4. How does spiritual exercise surpass bodily exercise?
5. What does it mean to be “an example of the believers”?
6. How can you be an example in the six areas of I Timothy 4:12?
7. What must you pursue to be godly?
8. What difference will this study make in your life this week?