

# Better

## PHYSICALLY



1 Timothy 4:7-10

We've all had those days where we hit the pillow wondering where the time and energy went. Our lives move fast, and it's easy to slip into survival mode: doing what's urgent, neglecting what's important, and hoping we'll find time for the rest later. But later doesn't always come. The Bible doesn't shy away from this reality. In fact, it speaks directly to it: your time is limited, your strength is finite, and your calling is too important to live carelessly.

In *Leading Yourself*, Mac Lake challenges us to think differently about our energy, not just as something we need to "have," but something we're called to *steward*. Not just for our health, but for God's purposes. Scripture makes the same point. Paul tells Timothy to train – not just physically, but spiritually. To pursue a kind of disciplined living that fuels godliness and lasts beyond this life.

## ICEBREAKER

If you had to compete in one Olympic event tomorrow, which one would you choose?

## READ IT

Read 1 Timothy 4:7-10

## GET IT

1. In verse 7, what is Timothy told to avoid, and what is he told to pursue instead?

2. What two kinds of training does Paul mention in verse 8, and how does he compare their value?
3. According to verse 8, what benefits come from training in godliness and when do those benefits show up?
4. How does Paul describe his own effort and motivation in verse 10? What does this reveal about his priorities?

## LIVE IT

Scripture reminds us our days are numbered: you don't get more time, you get this time. Paul urges believers to "look carefully then how you walk... making the best use of the time" (Eph. 5:15-16), and Moses prays, "teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom" (Ps. 90:12). Life isn't just measured in days and years, but in how we use them!

In *Leading Yourself*, Mac Lake writes that we cannot extend our *lifespan* beyond what God has already appointed. But we *can* expand our *health span* by being intentional about making the most of the days we've been given.<sup>8</sup> This changes the question. It's not just "how long will I live?" but "how well can I live for God with the days I've been given?" That's not about hustle culture or added pressure for productivity. It's about living with purpose and wisdom.

When we fail to think intentionally about our time, it's not just our schedules that suffer, it's our relationships, our witness, and our spiritual fruitfulness. Paul's call to walk carefully is a call to live purposefully, not reactively. Wisdom begins with numbering our days and asking God how best to use them.

5. What most distracts you from investing your time with intentionality?

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<sup>8</sup> Mac Lake, *Leading Yourself: A Guide to Cultivating Personal Leadership* (100 Movements Publishing, 2024), 90-91.

**6. What would it look like to evaluate your time not by productivity, but by purpose?**

**7. If you knew exactly how many days you had left, what would you start doing differently today?**

In his letter to Timothy, Paul draws a clear parallel between physical training and spiritual training. He doesn't dismiss physical discipline but affirms its value. Taking care of your body matters. It matters not because your worth is in your fitness, but because the body God has given you is a tool for serving Him and others around you.

In *Leading Yourself*, Mac Lake emphasizes this exact point: you don't need to be a health fanatic, but you *do* need to pay attention to the rhythms that affect your energy. That includes sleep, rest, exercise, what you eat, and how you manage stress.<sup>9</sup> These aren't superficial concerns because they affect your availability, attitude, and awareness in the life God has called you to live.

Jesus wasn't disembodied. He ate, walked, slept, wept, touched, and took time to retreat. Our faith is an embodied one. If we neglect the physical, we may find ourselves too depleted to show up for the people and opportunities God places in our path.

**8. In what ways have cultural messages (e.g., productivity pressure, image obsession, or self-indulgence) shaped how you view your body or energy? How does the gospel reframe that?**

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<sup>9</sup> Mac Lake, *Leading Yourself: A Guide to Cultivating Personal Leadership* (100 Movements Publishing, 2024), 97-107.

9. Mac Lake emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the rhythms that shape your energy. What rhythms in your life are currently helping you? Which ones are hurting you?
10. Why do you think it's so easy to treat physical health as something separate from your spiritual life? How does Scripture challenge that divide?
11. What's one small, realistic change you could make to your physical routines this week that would increase your energy and focus for what matters most?

Physical discipline isn't unspiritual, it just isn't ultimate. Paul says bodily training has *some* value (1 Tim. 4:8), and that value increases when it's rooted in a desire to honor the Lord. We don't pursue health for its own sake or out of vanity. We pursue it because our bodies belong to God knowing they are tools for His mission, temples of His Spirit, and vessels for His work in the world.

But Scripture also calls us to pursue a different kind of training: *spiritual* discipline. When Paul tells Timothy to "train yourself for godliness," he uses the Greek word *gumnaze*, the root of our English word *gymnasium*. Essentially, Paul's telling us to *hit the gym for godliness*. Spiritual disciplines like prayer, Scripture reading, worship, Sabbath, fasting, and solitude are how we train. They're habits that root us in God's truth and grace, aligning us with His purposes, strengthen us for daily faithfulness, and shape us for eternal impact.

**12. If godliness "is of value in every way," what's at stake if we neglect this kind of training?**

**13. How do you tend to respond when spiritual disciplines feel dry or difficult? What might faithfulness look like in those seasons?**

**14. Which spiritual discipline has been most helpful in shaping your walk with God and why?**

**15. If you were to honestly evaluate your current “training plan” for godliness, what kind of growth would you expect to see in the months ahead?**

**16. Where could you create space in your weekly schedule to intentionally train in godliness, even in a small way?**

## INTRODUCING “BETTER: DISCIPLESHIP FROM THE INSIDE OUT”

Discipleship isn't just about what we know but who we are becoming. The call to follow Jesus is an invitation to a transformed life. Jesus calls us to a *better* way, one that begins in the heart and flows outward into every thought, every word, every relationship, and every decision.

When Jesus called His disciples, He reshaped their priorities, their values, and their way of life. As they walked with Him day by day, their character and conduct began to reflect His. That same transformation is His goal for us through the daily, patient work of His Spirit forming us from the inside out.

This series, *Better: Discipleship from the Inside Out*, takes that vision seriously. If we want to grow as disciples of Jesus, we must begin with the most foundational area of leadership, the leadership of our own lives. Self-leadership in the Christian life is not about willpower or self-improvement; it's about daily surrender to Christ and intentionally cultivating habits of life that align with His way.

Over the coming weeks, we will explore six areas where Jesus calls us to grow: missionally, emotionally, collaboratively, intellectually, physically, and relationally. These aren't separate compartments to check off, but connected aspects of a whole life shaped by the gospel. As we grow in one, we find the others strengthened. This is what discipleship does, it works from the inside out, touching every part of who we are.

While this series draws inspiration from Mac Lake's *Leading Yourself*, our purpose is not to teach a book but to preach the Bible. His framework provides a helpful structure, but the heart of this series is God's Word, anchored in Scripture, centered on Christ, and aimed at the transformation of His people.

Our prayer is that we will not only learn about the better way, but that we will live it. That we will see where our lives are divided and invite the Spirit to bring wholeness. That we will not settle for partial discipleship, but pursue an integrated life of faith that is shaped by Christ in every part, from the inside out.

## WANT TO GO DEEPER?

Our small group series is built around many of the key ideas found in *Leading Yourself* by Mac Lake.

This practical and insightful book is a valuable companion to the discussions we'll be having together. If you're looking to grow in personal leadership, character, and spiritual maturity, we highly recommend picking up a copy to read alongside the weekly lessons.

DISCIPLING LEADERS SERIES

# LEADING YOURSELF

TRAINING GUIDE

Developing the  
Character and Competency  
to Lead Yourself

Mac Lake

Foreword by John C. Maxwell

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