

Lesson 4: Godliness in Everyday Life

Why do some people derive very little benefit from their membership in the Church? Evidently they do not let the Gospel take a firm hold of their hearts and permit its influence to reach out into their daily lives. With some people, faith in Christ seems to be nothing more than a Sunday morning affair. During the week, they lay it aside and live just as the world does. The Christianity they profess is a sham. Paul shows that a believer practices his or her faith every day of his or her life.

The Way to Enjoy God's Gifts

Read 1 Timothy 4:1–5. The people who try to spoil the good things in life for us are those who want us to follow their wisdom instead of the Word of God. Paul warns Timothy and all believers against these false leaders. When people set up all kinds of rules of life by which they think they can make the world better and even claim divine authority for their pet notions, they are dangerous deceivers and are spreading “teachings of demons” (v. 1). They are skillful in using pious phrases, but their teachings leave people with a bad conscience. Paul’s prophecy has come true; there have been many who caused disturbances in the Church with their human-made doctrines. For instance, how often has it been claimed, even by church bodies, that marriage is sinful or that a Christian may not use certain kinds of food? Some have insisted that a person must deny himself natural and created blessings to please God and go to heaven. But what does the Bible say about the things of this life? It teaches plainly that God has given them to us for our welfare and enjoyment. To be sure, we are not to use them in a sinful manner, as unbelievers often do. The Christian knows that God has created these things for his use and benefit. He or she is deeply grateful to God for these gifts and uses them in a God-pleasing manner to His glory. Thus marriage is a divine institution, and therefore it must serve the good of humankind (Genesis 2:18; Hebrews 13:4). They also know that God causes the earth to bring forth food for their sustenance (Genesis 1:29). Everything that is wholesome for the body may be eaten with a good conscience, especially when it is received with prayer and thanksgiving (Matthew 6:11; Fourth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer).

1. What human-made rules have churches set up as means for obtaining salvation and blessing from God?
2. What does 1 Timothy 4:4 teach concerning the use of alcoholic beverages? Does the New Testament forbid the use of any kind of food or drink (Colossians 2:16; 1 Corinthians 10:31)?
4. Describe the character of false teachers and note what the Word of God identifies as the source of their error. What effect do human restrictions have upon people’s consciences?

The Christian's Estimate of Values

Read 1 Timothy 4:6–11. Paul wants believers to have good judgment and a sound understanding of values. The good doctrine, which only the Bible can teach, is the Gospel, and its goodness is the blessing of salvation that it brings. Therefore, our chief concern should be to grow in the knowledge of God's Word and become strong in the faith. The soul constantly needs nourishment, and it will be well nourished if we make diligent use of the Holy Scriptures. The more firmly we are grounded in the Word of God, the easier it will be for us to recognize and resist the foolish and dangerous doctrines of men. Maintaining physical health is not forbidden, of course, but no amount or kind of bodily discipline will improve upon the grace of God or make us more righteous and holy in God's sight. Compared with the value of a godly life, all things pertaining to the body are of minor importance. But true godliness, which includes both faith and a sanctified life, promises spiritual life both now (life under the cross lived in humility and weakness) and in eternity (life in resurrection triumph lived in power and glory). As long as we live a life of faith, we have spiritual life, which finally is realized as eternal life in heaven. Believers may always be sure of this because they have God's promise. Therefore, they should daily exercise themselves unto godliness and put their trust in the living God, regardless of what they have to do or suffer in this world.

5. Why is it important that we are nourished with God's Word?

6. How do some people show that the care of their bodies means more to them than that of their souls?

7. What does "some value" (v. 8) mean? What is godliness?

Living with a Purpose

Read verses 12–16. As a Christian, but especially as a pastor, Timothy had an important position to fill in the world (v. 11). A believer's entire conduct should indicate that he or she is a child of God. In order to keep one's spiritual life on a high plane, the believer should devote time to the study of the Word of God. This is particularly true of the pastor. He should seek to obtain a thorough knowledge of all doctrines of Scripture and learn to apply them to his life. God bestows priceless spiritual gifts upon us in Baptism and by means of the Word, which we read and hear. The pastor has in the same way received through the Word of God a special gift and enablement from God to shepherd God's people. If we neglect spiritual gifts, we may lose them.

9. Why is it just as important for the pastor to live out the Gospel among God's people?

10. What spiritual gift is imparted to those in the pastoral office?

11. Why should the pastor devote his time to the study and meditation of Scripture? What demands or expectations do church members sometimes have that fail to recognize this priority or that discourage the pastor from doing so?

12. How does the pastor's devotion to God's Word benefit the Church? How is this an example for all Christians?