

Get Serious. About Godliness. – 1 Timothy 4:6-10

How many of you loosely or casually follow a sports team?

How many of you don't much care, but enjoy a good game?

For the most part, you're *dabblers* – when your team wins you're happy, when they lose, you're disappointed – at least for a few minutes

But I'm pretty sure some of you are far more than dabblers – you're fanatics

You are single-mindedly invested in the day-to-day fortunes of your team

So much so, that your demeanor rises and falls on their success

When they win, life is good – until they lose

When they lose, life is bad, until they win – complete with depression, anger, etc

You're a fanatic – obsessed and consumed with the team you follow

Fact is, in sports these days – too many are fanatics and too few are dabblers

While in Christianity, in church – too many are dabblers and too few who are fanatics

Too few are true disciples

Too few are *serious* about their faith – like the 12 disciples whose all-consuming obsession was to follow Jesus

Listen to how George Barna described that (**Barna quote**, Growing True Disciples, 19)

Many of you serious like that about your faith

But many of you are *dabblers*

And the time has come to Get Serious

What if every single one of us were . . . disciples and not dabblers?

Passionate about knowing and loving God

Unswervingly committed to the truth of his Word

Single-minded in our pursuit of his purposes

What if every single one of us was serious about our faith?

Get Serious – that's our theme for the year

As in buckle down; apply yourself

Don't just talk the talk, but walk the walk

It doesn't mean get sour-faced, or joyless

The last thing I want is a bunch of stodgy grumps walking around here

It means cultivating godliness which among other things, *leads* to joy

So let's turn to 1 Tim 4:6-10 and **Get Serious. About Godliness.**

This passage contains our theme verses for the year, and tag line you see on the logo (t-shirt) – train yourself for godliness

In addition to the t-shirts, I've included a little memory verse card in your bulletin

Encourage you to put it up somewhere in your home, car, or pocket – and memorize

v7-8 as a reminder to Get Serious and train yourself for godliness this year (read it)

If you're going to get serious about godliness, you must . . .

Build your life on a biblical foundation (v6)

A foundation built on the *words of the faith and good doctrine*, just like Timothy

Words of faith refers to the gospel – the truth about who Jesus is and what he did

Good doctrine refers to the principles that summarize/express truth of God's Word

That's what Timothy had the privilege of knowing/following from childhood (2 Tim 3:15)

• Can we just dispel this whole aversion to *doctrine* in the church these days?

This unwritten, self-perpetuating “rule” that you should never use that word in church

It's like the “d” word

And whatever you do, don't *teach* it

People's eyes will glaze over, you're church will be empty, and the sky will fall

It's ridiculous

Unfortunately, pastors the world over have bought into it and continue to perpetuate it, resulting in Bible-light churches and lightweight believers

Hello – *doctrine* is a biblical word, inspired by God himself

And it's taught throughout the Scriptures, including right here in 1 Timothy

So why would we not use it, let alone not teach it?

I can only speculate, but this I know – apart from good doctrine, you can't build your life on a biblical foundation

• Paul's like – hey Timothy, you have a firm foundation, you've been *trained in the words of faith and good doctrine*, you've followed it, and I've taught you everything I know
So keep teaching these things – *put these things before the brothers* [the church] (6)
If you do, *you'll be a good servant of Christ Jesus*

He doesn't say – if you teach these things, you'll have a good church, or a big church, or a growing church

He says you will be a good *servant* – that's the goal, that's the end

That s/b your goal in whatever role God has called you to in life

That s/b my goal, pastoring this church like Timothy pastored the church in Ephesus

I hear these words loud and clear and they center me

“If you put these things before the brothers Rob Willey, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus” – everything else is inconsequential; gravy; icing on the cake

• Some of you, like Timothy, were raised . . .

Attending a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, Christ-exalting church

You were taught the truth, and you were taught to apply it in your life

You have much to be thankful for – you have biblical foundation upon which to build

Keep building

But others of you don't – you've just come to Christ and you're starting from scratch

Or maybe you've made such a mess of the good foundation you once had, that it's time to get serious and start over

It's time to put those biblical beliefs and godly practices in place that make for a solid, everlasting foundation upon which to build your life in Christ

Or maybe you've recently stepped out of a church that didn't teach you *good doctrine* and *the words of faith*

You too need to start over, replacing your current foundation, with the reinforced concrete of God's truth

Whatever the case, if you're going to get serious, you need to build on biblical foundation

We're going to spend the rest of this series discovering *how* to do that . . .

And the rest of this year actually *doing* it

If you're going to get serious, you must build your life on a biblical foundation

And second . . .

Avoid godless philosophies and weird religions (v7a)

(Read v7a) Paul just told him in v6 that he'd be a good servant, a good minister of the gospel if he basically preached the Word

Then it's like he leans in, 2" from his face and says, "now you listen to me . . . *Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths*

That is, godless philosophies and weird religions

Have nothing to do with silly exchanges like that of old, lazy women who have nothing better to do than exchange mindless banter

That's the sense of *silly myths* as used in the first century

When Paul said *have nothing to do with them* he couldn't have said it any stronger

It means avoid them like the plague; actively reject; waste no time getting away from

Don't mess with, don't dabble in, don't touch with a ten foot pole

If you're going to get serious about your faith, avoid godless ones

Avoid weird religions that deny the deity of Jesus Christ and authority of God's Word

Like Christian Science; Mormonism; Scientology

Avoid godless philosophies that reject the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ – that he died in your place to pay the price for your sin, as the only way to God

Like JW's, Unification Church; Transcendental Meditation

No matter what the names are, avoid them like the plague

I'm not saying avoid the *people* involved in those things (unless they're dragging you down) – I'm saying, avoid the *error*

Focus on the words of faith and the good doctrine of God's Word like Paul did

To help you with that, I'm going to do a series starting in October called Get Serious

About the Word

Giving you an overview of the Bible and hopefully tying the Scriptures together in a way you've never heard or understood . . .

So that you can build your life on a biblical foundation, avoid godless philosophies and weird religions, and most importantly . . .

Train yourself for godliness (v7b-10)

Look at v7 (read it)

Like so much of Scripture, this is a command meant to be obeyed, not an option meant to be considered – *Train yourself for godliness*

- Train yourself to be . . .

Righteous on the inside and holy on the outside; Pure of heart and clean of hands

Devoted to God – inside and out

100% dedicated to the unhindered pursuit of his purposes – that's godliness

It's the heart/soul of all Christian character, the aim of all Christian living . . .

And it s/b the life-long goal and desire of every single follower of Jesus

In fact, we find in 1 Tim 6:11 that it's something to be pursued (read it)

It's something to strive for and toil after (read 4:10)

Toil – to work to the point of weariness and exhaustion

Strive – to engage in a struggle

We are to engage in a struggle for godliness to the point of weariness and exhaustion

That's serious wouldn't you say?

When's the last time you spent so much time on your knees that you were exhausted?

When's the last time you spent so much effort studying the Word that you were weary?

When's the last time you spent so much energy serving the Lord that you were spent?

Becky and I going to funeral tomorrow of one of the most godly men we've ever known

His name is **Warren Webster** – He/wife served as missionaries in Pakistan for 16 yrs

Came back to the states only to lead a large mission organization for 22 years

He was one of the keynote speakers 3x running at Urbana – the tri-annual missions conference of 30k students and YA's

Despite the fact that he developed Parkinson's disease at age 55, he was in church every single day serving as a Missions Pastor for the last 11 years of his life

His life was characterized through and through, start to finish, top to bottom, by a total consecration/dedication/devotion to God and his purposes

That's godliness; That's how I want to be

- But it doesn't come naturally

It requires *training* – rigorous, disciplined, ongoing exercise

A desire for godliness, apart from training, won't get you very far

Just like a desire to run a marathon apart from any training, will get about a mile down the road

We must *train* ourselves for godliness

That means getting serious; buckling down and staying that way

Just like athletes train themselves for sports; Doctors for medicine; Architects for design

Musicians for music; Teachers for teaching

So too, as Christians, we need to train ourselves for godliness

That's why we're going to spend the next 6 or 7 weeks studying the Spiritual Disciplines

Practices that God has shown us in the Bible, that are conducive to training for godliness

Spiritual Disciplines like – serving, fellowship, worship, prayer, giving, and soaking up the Word

We're going to look at those practices/disciplines in Scripture, and hopefully you will be spurred on to actually do them in your life as the means to *train* yourself for godliness

- And you must train *yourself*; Nobody can do it for you

You have to come to church every Sunday; *You* have to open your Bible every Monday

You have to get on your *own* knees; You have to serve with your *own* time

You have to give of your *own* money; You have to expend your *own* effort

Nobody can do it for you – train *yourself* for godliness

It's my job to help you, and spur you on

It's your job to follow through and make it happen

- And why wouldn't you for something so valuable? (read 8-9)

The saying most likely refers to v8 and the fact that godliness is of the utmost value
Certainly more valuable than physical/*bodily* training
And yet, even as believers, it seems that sometimes we spend far more time, money, and energy on shaping our bodies than we do shaping our souls

Paul is not saying that physical exercise is worthless – it *does* have *some* value, and you should do it
But its value is temporal and limited, and you must keep it in perspective

If you're spending more time and thought and energy on training your body to be *physically* fit, than you are your soul to be *spiritually* fit – you've got it backwards
Because the benefits of training for godliness far exceed the benefits training for fitness
Who cares if you have a fit body and live to be 100, if you lose your own soul?
Who cares if you're a physical *stud*, if you're a spiritual *run*t? God doesn't

Understand that godliness holds promise for the life to come not because it gains or ensures your salvation – God alone does that as an act of his sovereignty
Rather, godliness holds promise for the life to come because it enables you to persevere in your faith until you get there

In the meantime, it *holds promise for the present life* in the form of . . .
Unexpected blessings, unspeakable joy, unusual peace, unknowable wisdom, unshakable hope, and unbelievable favor
That's the value of godliness in *every way* and for all time

- But the benefits are not the only motivating factor
Nor is the command to train yourself for it
Both of those are part of the equation, but you should also train yourself for godliness because you *want* to

Because your *hope* [confident expectation] *is set on the living God* (10)
All your dreams, desires, expectations; who you are, who you hope to be . . .
Your entire life and eternity is in God's hands; It's *set on the living God* . . .
And you want nothing more than to fully devote yourself to him *who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe*, including yourself (10)
You should train yourself for godliness because you *want* to

V10 is not a teaching on universalism – that God saves everybody no matter what
Some try to advocate that, but that's not what it means
Nor does it square with the rest of Scripture
Rather, the second statement in v10 is meant to explain the first . . .
With the word *especially* meaning *namely*; That's what it means in other NT passages
God is the Savior of all people, especially [or *namely*] *those who believe*.

The point is, train yourself for godliness not only because God commands it and the benefits are worth it, but because you *want* to
Because he's the focus of your life, and you want nothing more than to please him
If that's you – you're well on your way to training yourself for godliness
If it's not, it's time to **Get Serious**

Pray

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Get Serious about Discipleship and the Spiritual Disciplines