

Are You Serious? – 1 Timothy 4:7-8

Good to be back; Thankful for Dan, Garth, Mike; Great to have HS back from Jamaica

Want to do 2 things in this message

1. Review our theme and focus this past year (**Get Serious**) – what we’ve learned
2. Evaluate our progress – actually, I want you to evaluate *your* progress
To assess where you’re at in your pursuit of godliness, versus where you were this time last year

It’s kind of like the review day in school – the day before you took the test

You know – the blow-off day you when you didn’t listen, and wish you would have when you actually took the test

So this is the review, the rest of your life is the test, and the goal is to become a disciple who is single-minded in your pursuit of godliness . . .

As opposed to a *dabbler* who gets excited from time to time, but has little to show for it when it’s all said and done

So let’s turn to 1 Tim 4:7-8 and refresh our memory of Paul’s instruction to train ourselves for godliness (read it)

This was Paul’s charge to Timothy as he lived his life

And by example, it’s God’s charge to us as we live ours

We are to *train* ourselves for *godliness*

To dedicate ourselves to holiness, inside and out

To devote ourselves to purity, through and through

To consecrate ourselves to God and his purposes, start to finish

That’s what it means to *train yourself for godliness*

Which you know as well as I, doesn’t come naturally

Training for godliness is work, just like training for a marathon is work

Which is why we must buckle down and get serious about it . . .

Striving and toiling to the point of weariness and exhaustion if necessary

That’s the implication of those two words in v10

Which begs the question – Why would you do such a thing?

Because *godliness is of value in every way* (8)

There’s no aspect of your life and mine, that is unaffected by godliness

It affects every single aspect of our lives, yielding . . .

Unexpected blessings, unspeakable joy, unusual peace, unshakable hope, and on and on

That’s the value of godliness in *every way*

And the benefits don’t stop when Jesus takes you home

G holds promise for the present life, and also for the life to come (8b)

That’s why it’s worthy of our serious pursuit

So, to that end, we spent 2 months studying the Spiritual Disciplines

The practices God has revealed to us in the Bible, that *lead* to godliness

Just like different stations in a weight room lead to strength and endurance . . .

The SD’s lead to godliness

So the question is, having spent this ministry year focusing on this – Are you serious?

Are you serious about godliness?

You are if you’re committed to discipleship

- **The life-long process of becoming more like Christ (Mk 1:14-20)**

The life-long process of *learning* all that God wants you to know

Being all that God wants you to be

Doing all that God wants you to do

We found from Mark 1 that a commitment to D requires 5 things:

1. A change of heart – faith and repentance
2. A change of focus – your life is no longer about you, but God
3. A love for Jesus – why would you follow someone you don’t love/treasure
4. A firm resolve – because though salvation is free, D may cost you everything
5. A desire to grow – because your life in Christ is not about coasting

It’s not about reaching a plateau and rotting there while you wait for Jesus to take you home and relieve you of any further training

So ask yourself (right now) – Am I *more/less* serious about D today, than I was this time last year?

Do a quick evaluation of your heart/life, and then write your answer in the margin of your notes – more/less/same

You’re serious about G . . .

You are if you’re committed to Worship (2 Sam 6)

- **The joyful response of your heart when you focus on the awesome glory of God**

On his awesome power and presence and love and sovereignty

We found from the example of David in 2 Sam 6, that any effort to get serious about worship *starts* with seeing God

If u don’t see him with the eyes of your heart, however dimly, you’ll never worship him

You’ll never long to push all else aside and just *be* in his presence

But once you do see him, worship is the *only* thing you’ll want to do

Everything else will *pale* in comparison

And it’s not just a personal thing

The inescapable command in the NT, and the crystal clear example in the OT is that we are to come together for corporate worship week in/week out, rain/shine

It’s a requirement, a duty if you will

But not a duty of *drudgery*; It a duty of *delight* – something you *want* to do

If you have any sort of feelings for the God who made you, and loves you, and saved you – how can it be otherwise?

Our attitude s/b – “I *get* to go to church and worship”

Not – “I *have* to go to church and worship”

And most of the time, that requires some real preparation on your part

You can’t just walk in here and expect to flip a switch – you have to prepare your heart

The more you do, the more you’ll worship

So ask yourself – Am I more/less serious about worship than I was this time last year?

Evaluate yourself, and make a note of it

You are if you're committed to fellowship (Act 2:42)

• The common bond of belonging together in mutual partnership

From the example of the early church we found that fellowship means . . .

Striving *together*, for the same things, at the same time, in the same way

Setting aside your personal preferences for the sake of the whole

Sharing all that you have, including your life, with those in the body of Christ

Cultivating relationships that lead to partnerships in the things of God

One of the best ways to do that, is to meet together in SG's – there's no better way

That's what the early church did in Acts, and that's what we do

Can't belong together in a biblical sense, if you don't meet together in a practical sense

If you've been around here for any length of time, you well know that we *urge* you to get plugged in to a SG

It's absolutely critical for your spiritual growth and your connection to body of Christ

In fact, if you don't get involved in either a SG or Service Team within 6 months of coming, our experience has been that you will *leave* after about 6 months

Not because we want you to, but because you don't feel *connected* – and you're not

You don't feel like anyone *knows* you – and they don't

You don't feel like anyone *cares* for you – and they *do*

But they can't do anything about it unless you take the first step and get plugged in

Are you more/less committed to fellowship than you were last year?

Or more pointedly, are you more/less committed to SG's than you were last year?

If you're serious about G, you're committed to fellowship

And fourth, you're . . .

You are if you're committed to service (Judges 6-7)

• The work of ministry

We saw from Gideon's example that we need to be serving others . . .

Even if they aren't; Even if we lack the strength; Even if we're not qualified

Even if we're afraid; And sometimes, even when it doesn't make sense

All of that was true for Gideon and his situation

And much of it may be true for you and your situation from time to time

And it's only when you step out in faith, and *commit* yourself to service, that he will help

If you don't, he won't, because you don't need it

And if God's *help* is not impetus enough to commit yourself to the work of ministry . . .

Consider that fact that he actually *wants* your involvement, and *tells* you to work for him

Are you serious about service these days? More or less than last year? Evaluate yourself

And then there's prayer – you're serious about training yourself for G . . .

You are if you're committed to prayer (1 John 5:14-15)

• Personal communication with God

You know you're serious about it if you *do* it – it's that simple

You're not serious about it if you think about it, agree with it, and talk about it

You're serious about prayer if you do it

I've preached on prayer several times, and will continue to do so, because it's one of our greatest deficiencies

We don't do it enough, either corporately or personally

But to the extent that we do, it's also one of our greatest assets

It's one of the things that makes us tick

• So many people want to know – “What's up with Harvest?”

Why are so many people walking in our doors?

Every now and then Becky will be out and about and somebody will see her Harvest gear and ask – Do you go to that church?

What's going on over there? Why all the excitement?

Has that happened to you?

I'll tell you – prayer; Prayer is one of the reasons so many good things are happening around here

It's not the only reason, but it's one of them

• I think that question is so common out there, that I'm going cover the other reasons in a 4 week series during the month of August, titled . . .

What's Up With Harvest? (Who we are, What we do, and Why)

I'm going to preach through the 4 Pillars you see on the wall of the lobby every time you walk in here, and hopefully answer that question

And in the process, see God save souls, change lives, and add to our number

Are you up for that? I hope so; Because I am

If you're not, it's going to be a really long month for both of us

• This would be a great series to invite someone to hear

To help you with that, we've not only prepared the invitations in your bulletin (which you can get more of in the lobby) . . .

But we've also prepared an E-vite of sorts, that you can access on our website, and send via email

If you go to our home page, click on the **new series icon**, and follow the simple instructions . . .

You'll end up sending them an email that links them back to a page (**graphic**) on our website that looks like this

The idea being, that they will browse our site a bit, and hopefully come

But all of that will be for naught, if you don't pray

So now would be a good time to get serious about prayer, and do it

6th is giving – you're serious about G . . .

You are if you're committed to giving (Mal 3:7-12)

• The faithful support of our church through your tithes and offerings

So many people try to get ahead or stay afloat financially by withholding their tithe

And what they end up doing is making their situation worse, because . . .

Prov 11:24 – *One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.*

Let me bottom line it – you’re serious about giving if you tithe to your church
As soon as you’re blessed with a paycheck or windfall, you turn around and give a tenth
of it to support the ministries of our church
In the meantime, you adjust your lifestyle to live on the remaining 90%

And not only does God promise to *provide* when you do that . . .
But he gives you incredible satisfaction in seeing him *use* your gifts, to change lives
and further his kingdom

Are you serious about giving?
You are if you know the *provision* and *joy* of consistent obedience . . .
As opposed the *shortage* and *misery* of keeping what you shouldn’t
Evaluate yourself and make a note of it

You’re serious about G if you’re committed to – D, Worship, Service, Prayer, Giving . .
You are if you’re committed to the Bible (Ps 19:7-11)
• **The Word of God**

We looked at Ps 19:7-11 on this, and found that there is no factor or SD more influential
and critical in training ourselves for godliness, than regular Bible intake
If we’re going to know God and be godly, we have to know his Word
If you’re going to grow in Christ, the *living* Word – you have to grow in your
knowledge of the *written* Word

And just to be clear, a commitment to the Bible includes a commitment to not only read it,
and study it, and memorize it – but most importantly, *apply* it
Bible studies that are high on knowledge but low on application are a dime a dozen
But those that challenge you to *apply* what you’re learning through the fellowship of
SG’s (where iron sharpens iron), are worth their weight in gold

That’s what we strive for around here
Because nothing else will revive your soul, inform your mind, open your eyes, or bring
joy to your heart like the Word of God applied
No wonder so many people are committed to it
And it’s a wonder more people aren’t

The question is – Are you?
If so, you’re well on your way to training yourself for godliness – valuable in every way
If not, it’s time to **Get Serious**

There’s no better time, than communion
No better time to confess your lack of seriousness and renew your commitment to G
than at the Lord’s Table

Communion

If Jesus is Lord of your life – join us
You don’t have to be a member, you just have to be a believer

But if Jesus is not Lord of your life . . .
If you haven’t trusted him to save you from your sin . . .
Let the bread and cup pass . . .
Take the time to reflect on what’s preventing you from doing so

- No matter who you are – examine your heart
If you eat and drink without considering your worthiness to participate
Bible says you will be guilty of showing disrespect and irreverence toward God . . .
And risk bringing judgment on yourself

So examine yourself first; Confess your sin; Renew your commitment
Then I’ll lead us in eating and drinking together (pray)

- In Luke 22 the last supper with Christ is recorded, where he lays the foundation for our
time together, now
19 – *He took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them,
saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”*
This broken bread is symbolic of my suffering on your behalf – my suffering in both life
and death
Eat it as a means of remembering all that I’ve done for you

20 – *And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for
you is the new covenant in my blood.”*
The contents of this cup are symbolic of Christ’s blood/death, that guarantees his new
promise of salvation for you
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me (1 Cor 11:25)

- We sang the song, “Love the Lord Your God” earlier
I can’t think of a better one to end w/, having reviewed the SD’s and shared communion
So let’s stand and worship

Close

Don’t forget to invite someone to our new series starting next week
You can use the invitation insert, or the E-vite on our webpage
Either way, we’ll trust God for what he’ll do