



A SPIRITUAL WORKOUT

BIG IDEA: Spiritual health requires spiritual nourishment and exercise.

DATE: Wednesday, October 15 and Sunday, October 19, 2025

SCRIPTURE: 1 Timothy 4:6-16

OPENING QUESTION

What are some ways you care for your physical health?

SHARE: According to the Global Wellness Institute the US spends \$265 billion annually on physical wellness. This represents about 25% of the global market and is projected to grow 5.2% annually over the next 5 years.

What about your emotional health?

SHARE: Americans spend on average \$374.95 per month on mental health which includes both direct (therapy, medication) and indirect related expenses.

And your spiritual health?

SHARE: Americans spend 63 times more time on television/streaming services than in personal religious practice. In fact, Americans spend an average of 2.4 minutes per day in personal worship.

These statistics show we are spiritually unfit and in need of some spiritual exercise! Today we are going to look at our need for spiritual workout. Just like a muscle, our faith grows when we exercise it.

SETTING THE STAGE

Paul instructs Timothy on the importance of exercising godliness – purposefully focusing on reading God’s Word, exhorting others to follow Christ, and studying godly doctrine. Paul tells his younger coworker in the faith that “spiritual workouts” will benefit Timothy as well as the people he has been called to lead.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1 Timothy 4:6-16 (NLT)

⁶ If you explain these things to the brothers and sisters, Timothy, you will be a worthy servant of Christ Jesus, one who is nourished by the message of faith and the good teaching you have followed. ⁷ Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives’ tales. Instead, train

yourself to be godly. ⁸ "Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come."

⁹ This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it. ¹⁰ This is why we work hard and continue to struggle, for our hope is in the living God, who is the Savior of all people and particularly of all believers. ¹¹ Teach these things and insist that everyone learn them. ¹² Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.

¹³ Until I get there, focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them. ¹⁴ Do not neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophecy spoken over you when the elders of the church laid their hands on you. ¹⁵ Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress. ¹⁶ Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you.

DISCUSSION

READ: 1 Timothy 4:6-8

Paul desires Timothy to "be a good minister of Jesus Christ." What does Paul say is necessary for him to do so he can effectively teach others? (see verse 6)

In the time of the apostle Paul, athletic facilities known as *gymnasias* were central to community life of Hellenistic cities. Ephesus, and most of the other cities Paul visited on his journeys, were thoroughly Hellenized. Paul does not disparage physical training in this passage, but how does he say it compares to godliness? (see verses 7-8)

READ: 1 TIMOTHY 4:9-12

Paul notes the saying he has quoted – "Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come." (verse 8) – is truthful and worthy of acceptance. What had Paul endured to lead people to godliness? (see verse 10)

Timothy may have been in his late 30's when Paul wrote this letter to him, which was still considered young for a teacher in first century Jewish culture. What did Paul say about this to Timothy?

ASK: Have you ever reported to someone younger than you? What was that like for you? What about the first time you noticed your doctor or dentist, or a teacher or pastor etc. was younger than you? Did it take some humility on your part to listen to them? (Some say you want your lawyer to be older and your doctor to be younger!)

How did Paul instruct Timothy to deal with the potentially awkward situation of leading a congregation of people who were older than him? (see verse 12)

What makes godliness a difficult discipline? How does the commitment to *discipline yourself in godliness* fit into your priorities?

READ: 1 Timothy 4:13-16

In Paul's day most people were illiterate, so a common practice was to have the letters read out loud in front of the congregation. Why do you think the reading of Scripture was at the top of Paul's to-do list for Timothy? (see verse 13)

How did the leaders of the early church affirm their support of Timothy before he left for Ephesus? (verse 14)

Paul was concerned for Timothy's continued growth – not only for his protégé's own sake, but also for the sake of those he was leading. For this purpose, in what ways does Paul exhort Timothy to exercise his gifts and look to his own spiritual health? (see verses 14-16)

RESPONSE

In what areas do you need spiritual training in order to grow as a disciple of Jesus and be an example to others? Here are three things to add to your "workout" routine:

- ✓ Enlist the help of your very own personal trainer – the Holy Spirit!
- ✓ Consume a balanced diet of prayer, worship and Bible study.
- ✓ Exercise godliness in the way you live out your faith.

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COMMENTARY

VERSE 6

Paul was not suggesting Timothy was not already *a good minister of Christ Jesus*. Instead, he was encouraging his son in the ministry to do what was already in his heart—to teach *these things*, the truths of the gospel, *to the brothers and sisters*. Although Timothy was a pastor of the church, his ultimate service was to *Christ Jesus*.

The *good minister of Christ Jesus* is *nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching* that Timothy had been following. Notice the wording of the first phrase. Servants of Jesus are *nourished* not merely by words of faith, but words of *the faith*, meaning the gospel. They also are nourished by *good teaching*. The term includes sound doctrine. Timothy not only had been taught the Scriptures since he had been a child (2 Tim. 3:14-15), but also he had *followed* them. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul commended his protégé for faithfully following his teaching and accepting the afflictions that came from doing so (2 Tim. 3:10-11).

VERSES 7-10

In contrast to sound doctrine were the *godless myths and old wives' tales* that Paul had already referenced as a problem in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:4). When he advised Timothy to such things, Paul was not saying Timothy had become embroiled with these false teachings. He wanted Timothy not to spend his time engaged with these pointless arguments.

As opposed to the futility of silly myths, Timothy should *train himself to be godly*. The word *train* means to discipline oneself. Timothy should focus on developing godliness in his life and in the lives of the Ephesian believers. The idea of training was similar to the regimen an athlete endures to prepare for competition. Using this metaphor for illustration, Paul noted that *physical training is of some value*. He was not saying people should not take care of their physical well being. Instead, Paul contrasted physical discipline with godliness. While the first is somewhat helpful, the latter is beneficial in every way. Physical development benefits participants temporally, but godliness holds *promise* not only for the *present life* but for *the life to come*.

The phrase *this ... saying* in verse 9 refers to Paul's admonition in the previous verses about godliness. Such a statement was *trustworthy* and deserved *full acceptance*. The phrase *that is why* in verse 10 could tie what follows to Paul's previous statement regarding the benefit of godliness. The term we included Paul and Timothy, who together would *labor and strive* in ministering the gospel. Service to Christ and His church involves work and effort.

Paul and Timothy worked because of their *hope*, which was not in any human agency but *in the living God*. Believers have hope because our God is not an inanimate idol made by human hands, but He is alive and involved in our lives.

Our hope is also in the fact that God is *the Savior of all people*. This statement does not mean that all people will be saved. Such an interpretation would be contrary to other Scriptures. (See Matt. 7:13-23.) Scholars suggest several understandings of the phrase *of all people*. One interpretation takes the word *Savior* to mean "preserver." Another reading emphasizes God has the means of salvation for all people through Christ. Sadly, many refuse His gift and reject Christ. The latter may be why Paul added the qualifying phrase *especially of those who believe*.

VERSES 11-12

Paul instructed Timothy to focus on teaching the gospel, gaining a hearing by the godly life he lived. The pastor has God-given authority to instruct God's people in the application of God's Word. Timothy had the responsibility and the right to *command* as well as to *teach these things*. The phrase *these things* refers to what had just been set forth.

Some of Timothy's opponents may have used age as a basis to challenge his leadership in Ephesus. Paul encouraged him not to let anyone, especially false teachers, *look down on* his youth. The culture valued the aged. An older teacher generally was considered wiser and more knowledgeable. Paul wanted Timothy not to allow anyone to belittle his ministry simply because he was relatively young. Still, Timothy may have been at least thirty years old.

How does a young pastor gain the respect of a more mature audience? Paul urged Timothy to *set an example for the believers*. Timothy's personal conduct would validate the truth of his words. The five areas mentioned in verse 12 were not meant to be an exhaustive list but represented ways the young pastor could show other believers how to behave.

Being an example *in speech* meant not only what Timothy preached but also how he said it. Ministers are to speak in such a way that brings credit to the substance of what they say. Likewise, all Christians are to be careful of the way they speak.

Being an example *in conduct* certainly included all the qualifications for a minister previously mentioned. However, this idea goes further to include behavior that makes up a person's character. Whether in public or in private, believers should act as people of God. In this case, the focus is not merely on ministers, but the conduct of all believers.

Being an example *in love* has obvious implications. People would be known as followers of Jesus by the love they had toward one another. (See John 13:35.) Of all the commands regarding how believers should treat one another, the most common and important was to love one another.

Being an example *in faith* does not mean “the faith,” but in the demonstration of trusting God. Taking God at His word involves carrying out His commands as well as believing Him for His blessings.

Being an example *in purity* was not intended to imply that, as a young man, Timothy was more subject to sins of the flesh than anyone else. Rather, Paul wanted Timothy to show his life was beyond reproach morally. In the same way, all believers are to live pure and holy lives before the Lord.

VERSE 13

Paul anticipated seeing Timothy again. Until then, Timothy should devote himself to three primary aspects of his pastoral ministry. *Public reading* referred to the reading of Scripture, likely as part of the worship service. The canon of New Testament texts had not been gathered yet, so the reading probably involved Old Testament scrolls. However, as Paul instructed churches to read his letters, the public reading could have included one or more of Paul’s epistles or other New Testament writings. (See 1 Thess. 5:27; Col. 4:16.)

Preaching began with the truth of scriptural texts and involved strong encouragement of people to believe and behave according to the Word. The previous adjective *public* could apply to the word *exhortation* as well. Timothy apparently had a gift for preaching. Paul wanted Timothy to exercise this gift for the benefit of the church and the advancement of the gospel. (See 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6.)

Teaching may have been the instructive part of the church’s worship. However, it also could imply the disciple making aspect of pastoral ministry. Both publicly and personally, Timothy was to teach not only the doctrinal truths of Scripture but also their practical application in life.

Like Timothy, believers must remain focused on God’s Word to be examples of godly living. As we live out the gospel among other believers and before the world, we encourage one another and bear witness to our Lord Jesus Christ.

VERSES 14-16

Use your spiritual gifts (v. 14). The word *gift* is the Greek word *charisma*. It simply means “a gracious gift from God.” Every Christian has the gift of the Spirit (Rom. 8:9) and at least one gift from the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit and the gifts from the Spirit, are bestowed by God at the moment of conversion.

However, when God calls a believer into a special place of ministry, He can and often does impart a spiritual gift for that task. When Timothy was ordained by the elders, he received an enabling gift from God when the elders laid hands on him. But for some reason, Timothy had neglected to cultivate this gift which was so necessary to his spiritual progress and ministry.

It is encouraging to know that the God who calls us also equips us to do his work. Period we have nothing in ourselves that enables us to serve him; The ministry must all come from God. However, we must not be passive; We must cultivate God's gifts, use them, and develop them in the ministry of the local church and wherever God puts us.

Devote yourself fully to Christ (v. 15). Meditate carried the idea of *be in them, give yourself totally to them*. Timothy’s spiritual life and ministry were to be the absorbing, controlling things in his life,

not merely sidelines that he occasionally practiced. There can be no real pioneer advance in one's ministry without total dedication to the task. "No man can serve two masters," (Matthew 6:24).

While I (Warren Wiersbe) do not want to sound critical, I must confess that I am disturbed by the fact that too many pastors and Christian workers divide their time and interest between the church and some sideline. Their own spiritual lives suffer, and their churches suffer, because these men are not devoting themselves wholly to their ministry. "This one thing I do" was Paul's controlling motive, and it ought to be ours too. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways," (James 1:8).

Take spiritual inventory (v. 16). Examine your own heart in the light of the word of God. Note that Paul put thyself ahead of the doctrine. Paul had given this same warning to the Ephesian elders in his farewell message. The servant of God can be so busy helping others that he neglects himself in his own spiritual walk.

The Great American evangelist of the 1800s, Charles Finney, used to preach on this text. He titled his sermon "Preacher, Save Thyself." That sermon is needed today, for we are seeing people having to leave the ministry because their lives have not kept up with their profession. Moral problems, divorces, and other kinds of shameful conduct have destroyed many of God's servants. "If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall" (1 Cor.10:12, NLT).

The building up of the saved and the winning of the lost are the purposes for our ministry, to the glory of God. But God must work *in* us before he can effectively work *through* us. As good ministers, we preach the Word; as godly ministers, we practice the Word; as growing ministers, we progress in the Word.

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