

LEADER GUIDE

CHARACTER COUNTS

GODLINESS

BIG IDEA: A godly life points others to Christ.

DATE: Sunday, August 23, 2026

SCRIPTURE: 1 Timothy 4:6-16

OPENING QUESTION

You can tell a lot about people when you visit their home. When the mantle is lined with athletic trophies or first place ribbons, you can tell the person is into sports. Or perhaps it's their bookshelves overflowing with books. Here's a person who is into reading. Walls covered with framed pictures of kids point to a person for whom family takes precedence.

Based on what's seen in your house, what would others say you are "into"? How does your décor reflect who you are or what you like?

I might ask what in our homes points to a love for Jesus, but that's the wrong question. A lot of people might have a Bible on a bookshelf or a piece of artwork depicting Jesus, but those external things don't necessarily point to a love for Jesus. But when we live for Jesus, that makes all the difference.

Have you ever played the game Jenga®? Think of it as the one Jenga piece apart from which the whole structure falls. The Bible points us to a quality that is that critical piece in our lives: godliness. Without godliness, the structure of our lives as believers falls apart. Our study will point our attention toward this crucial characteristic of godliness.

Today we are going to see how a godly life points others to Christ.

SETTING THE STAGE

First Timothy is grouped in a collection of Paul's letters known as the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy; Titus). These letters were written to some of Paul's coworkers, whom the apostle had left in charge of the churches at Ephesus (Timothy) and Crete (Titus). Written toward the end of Paul's life, 1 Timothy challenged Paul's mentee to stand strong against false teachings (1:3) and ungodly practices (3:15) that had arisen in the Ephesian church. Both of these emphases are prominent in 1 Timothy 4:6-16.

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Timothy 4:6-16 (CSB)

⁶ If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished by the words of the faith and the good teaching that you have followed. ⁷ But have nothing to do with pointless and silly myths. Rather, train yourself in godliness. ⁸ For the

training of the body has limited benefit, but godliness is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

⁹ This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance. ¹⁰ For this reason we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. ¹¹ Command and teach these things.

¹² Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. ¹³ Until I come, give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching. ¹⁴ Don't neglect the gift that is in you; it was given to you through prophecy, with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. ¹⁵ Practice these things; be committed to them, so that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶ Pay close attention to your life and your teaching; persevere in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

DISCUSSION

READ: 1 TIMOTHY 4:6-8

We can also identify examples in our own time that keep a godly life from being a priority. Here are a few:

"Be who you are" or "You do you." When God-given abilities are the subject, then it's not bad advice. But what about if we're talking about character? If I have sinful tendencies that hurt other people, I shouldn't simply throw up my hands and say, "Well, that's just who I am."

"Follow your heart." I ran across a card with this message: "You can't get lost following your heart." That's simply not true. If I believe this, then the most important thing in my life will be my own desires, not becoming a godly person.

"Just live your life." This advice is a variation on the previous one. It allows someone to simply become consumed with a "go along and get along" approach to life and ignoring a higher calling and pursuit.

GUIDE: Use the commentary for these verses to explain the background of 1 Timothy.

Recap: Paul gave Timothy an excellent reason why a godly life should be a priority. It would benefit him—as it does us—in every way. Look at what he wrote: "For the present life and also for the life to come" (v. 8). There's a dual benefit: It enriches the life I'm living now, and it also prepares me for what comes after death. Here's the way one writer put it: In life we are weaving a garment we will wear in eternity. That garment is our character, and we will take it with us into the life to come.

Why is physical training a good illustration for training in godliness?

What are some ways we can train ourselves in godliness?

How does an eternal perspective help guide us in the present?

Read this definition and paragraph about godliness:

GODLINESS

Respect for God that affects the way a person lives. The term “godliness” appears most frequently in Paul’s writings. Paul encouraged Timothy to pursue “godliness” in an active manner. By so doing, Paul challenged Timothy to develop a true respect for God and to live his life based on that respect. This characteristic was also recognized as being of “great gain” in the life of a Christian. Peter likewise encouraged his readers to add to their lives “godliness” as a way of living. Godliness reflects a life devoted to and characterized by deep respect for and commitment to God. This concept is integral to living out one’s faith authentically and consistently.

Transition: A godly life must be our priority. In the next verses, we see that a godly life is grounded in our Christ-centered hope.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 4:9-11

Recap: **What we ultimately value is what we believe will be there for us in the end.** There are things we put our trust in because we’re convinced they’ll carry through to the end of life and beyond. This is what we call hope. Our hope is what we believe to be trustworthy applied toward the future.

Paul assured Timothy that what he had just said about godliness having value for the life to come was a truth that could be counted on. This was a “go-to” phrase for Paul in the writings of his later years (1 Tim. 1:15, 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8). While used partially in some places, the full statement is used in 1 Timothy 4:9: “This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance.”

GUIDE: Use the commentary for these verses to further explain Paul’s “saying.”

Recap: This hope is not a vague, impersonal abstraction of some distant future. Paul made it very personal when he added the notion of God as the Savior for everyone and “especially of those who believe” (v. 10). While even non-believers are recipients of God’s goodness in the world (Acts 14:17), hope has a name and a face for believers: Jesus Christ.

I’ve been given what everyone has been given: the breath of life. Of course, without that, there is no pursuit of godliness. But because Jesus has become my Savior through faith in His atoning sacrifice, I want to become as godly as I possibly can before the day on which I stand before God.

What are things or people the world puts its hope in?

How has hope carried you through some tough times?

How would you describe Christ-centered hope to a non-believer?

Transition: In the next verses, we see that a godly life can encourage others to seek a godly life.

READ: 1 TIMOTHY 4:12-16

Complete this activity to help your group reflect on where they really place their hope.

Where Have I Placed My Hope? Write the following areas on the board or read them out loud. Talk about each area and ask them to share where they have placed their hope.

- _____ I placed my hope in my family growing up.
- _____ I placed my hope in my education/intellect.
- _____ I placed my hope in strength/sports/performance.
- _____ I placed my hope in getting a good job/career.
- _____ I placed my hope in a relationship or marital status.
- _____ I placed my hope in money and possessions.
- _____ I placed my hope in my physical appearance.
- _____ I placed my hope in having “the perfect” family.

We can easily lose sight of where we should place our hope. Our hope is in Christ!

What does the command to persevere tell us about the challenges of godly living?

Use the commentary for these verses to describe the example Paul wants Timothy to set.

Summarize: Some of the same characteristics are listed in verse 12 as specific qualities to be emulated. Let’s look at them:

- **Our speech.** Never underestimate the power of godly words.
- **Our conduct.** People watch what you do, even when you don’t realize it.
- **Our love.** Since the Bible defines God as love, it isn’t surprising that a godly life is a life of love.
- **Our faith.** Deepen your faith in God and His Word and watch holiness increase in your life.
- **Our purity.** Moral compromises are the death of personal godliness.

How has our group encouraged godly living in the areas of our speech, our conduct, our love, our faith and our purity?

How can we avoid complacency as we pursue godly living?

RESPONSE

A godly life points others to Christ. Choose one of the following applications.

Train. Set aside fifteen minutes every day this week to read a passage of Scripture and talk to God about how you can pursue godliness in your life.

Journal. As you study this content this week, journal your thoughts, convictions, and insights. Write out the steps you need to take in your pursuit of godliness.

Impact. Make a list of the people you influence with your life. Ask God to provide you with opportunities to impact one of these people through your pursuit of godliness and make a

plan to do so.

Pray: Thank God for the Holy Spirit's work in our life. Ask Him to help us point others to Christ.

COMMENTARY

1 TIMOTHY 4:6-8

Connection to The Point: Living a godly life benefits us in every way.

If you point these things out (v. 6). Paul urged Timothy to point *these things* out, meaning the warnings the apostle had given in verses 1-5. Paul warned against the false teachings that came from deceitful spirits and demons (v. 1). These false teachings denigrated marriage, an institution ordained by God, encouraging instead celibacy and asceticism (v. 3). They also encouraged abstinence from foods which were part of God's good creation and contributed to healthiness. These peripheral issues sidetracked the Ephesian church, and Timothy needed to address them.

The phrase *point out* literally means to place under. In this instance it means to suggest or bring to mind, the meaning often found in secular Greek literature. Paul wanted Timothy to expose false teachings in the sense of bringing them out into the open, so they could be corrected with the truth. In Romans 16:4, the term is used in reference to Paul's friends and coworkers, Priscilla and Aquila. They "*risked* their own necks" (emphasis added) for Paul, imagery that comes from how a person's neck would be laid down on the executioner's block under a sword or axe to have the head severed from his or her body.

Good teaching (v. 6). If the "words of the faith" included the gospel, then *good teaching* would have included the teachings of the apostle Paul concerning the Christian faith. It is a synonym for "sound teaching" (1 Tim. 1:10). Paul encouraged Timothy to nourish himself on the truths of the gospel and the apostle's teachings about the faith, just as Timothy had done in the past (2 Tim. 1:5).

That you have followed (v. 6). Timothy had embraced the gospel and the teachings of the apostle Paul; he had committed himself to obedience and consistently practiced the faith. The term for *followed* is a compound Greek verb made up of the words for "to accompany" and "beside." It pictures a person walking beside someone or something, in this case, a disciple closely following the truths of the gospel and Paul's teachings.

Pointless and silly myths (v. 7). *Pointless* refers to gnostic teachings that claimed to have secret truths available only to a select few initiated into the group. The term means profane, that which is separate from God. While the Gnostics claimed to possess secret truths, they were in fact far from God. *Silly myths* were fictional stories like those told to children. The term for *myths* appears in Titus 1:14 in regard to "Jewish myths." The stories of false religions and fables designed to impact behavior had no authority. It is the gospel and God's Word that are the believer's authority.

Train yourself (v. 7). The Greek term for *train* is borrowed from athletics. Literally it referred to physical training but was also used figuratively of mental and spiritual training (see 1 Cor. 9:24-27). While God has given us everything needed for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3), and He produces holiness in us, He accomplishes this in part through the intentional, focused effort and discipline of the believer in living out the faith through the power of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5; Phil. 2:12-13).

Godliness (v. 7). The Greek term for *godliness* refers to a God-directed reverence, the manifestation of the character of God in the believer's life. In contrast to false teachings, true *godliness* comes through living in obedience to God's Word.

Elsewhere, Paul reminded Timothy that sound teaching about Jesus promotes godliness (1 Tim. 6:3). Contrary to the false teachers, godliness is not a means to material gain (v. 5). Furthermore, some held to an outward appearance of godliness, but denied and inwardly lacked true godliness (2 Tim. 3:5). The gospel—the knowledge of truth—produces true godliness (Titus 1:1; Heb. 10:26).

1 TIMOTHY 4:9-11

Connection to The Point: A godly life is grounded in our Christ-centered hope.

This saying (v. 9). Most Bible students believe Paul was referring back to verse 8 where he wrote, “But godliness is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” This saying highlighted the fact that godliness was more beneficial than asceticism. The goal of the Christian faith in this life is not merely attempting to stop doing certain things. Rather, it is becoming like Christ in all that we say and do, preparing our hearts for a great reunion with Him. However, some interpreters believe that the trustworthy saying is found in verse 10.

We labor and strive (v. 10). The two terms are similar in meaning. To *labor* is to work hard, to be wearied with great toil. To *strive* is to struggle, literally to compete for a prize. It was the word used for athletic competition. It pictures the runner stretching out reaching for the finish line. Both words indicate great effort and energy expended to reach a desired goal. Later in the letter, Paul encouraged Timothy to “fight the good fight of the faith” (6:12). The desired outcome is growth toward spiritual maturity in this life and our glorification at the end of the age—what Paul referred to as “the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). The apostle labored and strove to grow in godliness before he faced the judgment of the Lord. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7).

Our hope (v. 10). The modern use of *hope* most often refers to a wish or desire that may or may not come true. In Greek, the term for *hope* involves expectation rather than wishful thinking. It is the longing for something that is certain. It is a solid expectation based upon truth. So certain is the reality of salvation that Paul could write of it as having occurred in the past tense. “For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified” (Rom. 8:29-30). Trust in the Lord, the living God, is firmly placed; it is never wishful thinking (Ps. 25:5-6; Rom. 8:31-39). Hope in God’s Word is also as sure as hoping in the Lord Himself (Ps. 119:114). Hope in the Lord provides renewed strength (Isa. 40:31) and strength in suffering (Rom. 5:3-5).

The Savior of all people (v. 10). This phrase is not teaching universalism, the belief that every person will eventually go to heaven regardless of whether or not they accept Christ as their *Savior*. Such a belief contradicts both the words of Jesus (John 14:6) and Paul’s teachings. Jesus is the *Savior* of all people in the sense that the gospel is open to all people.

Especially of those who believe (v. 10). With these words, Paul was guarding against the misinterpretation of the previous phrase “the Savior of all people.” Though God desires all people to receive salvation through repentance and faith in Christ (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9), not all will be saved. Paul had previously stated that Christ gave Himself as a ransom for all (1 Tim. 2:6; see also 1 John 2:2), but he also knew that people who rejected Christ were lost, to the point that in regard to his fellow Jews, Paul wished that he could be accursed so that others could be saved (Rom. 9:2-3). In both 2:6 and this verse, Paul was emphasizing that only God through Jesus Christ (not celibacy or asceticism as in 1 Tim. 4:1-5) can save people, and only those who repent of their sins and place their faith in Jesus will be saved.

Command and teach these things (v. 11). Both Greek verbs are present tense, indicating continuous action. They are also both imperatives. To *command* someone is to give directions and/or instructions with the expectation that they will be obeyed. To *teach* someone is to lay a foundation of the truth upon which people could grow spiritually and make their own correct decisions. In the face of false teachings, Timothy was to both live a godly life himself and teach others to live godly lives based upon the truths of the gospel, including the blessed hope of the believer's promised glorification and eternal life with and through Christ. In doing both, Timothy would prepare the way for pointing others to Christ.

1 TIMOTHY 4:12-16

Connection to The Point: The practice of a godly life leads others to Christ.

Your youth (v. 12). Paul encouraged Timothy not to allow others to reject his teachings because of his youth. The issue was not Timothy's age but his spiritual maturity and the authority of the gospel that lay behind his teachings. Timothy was likely between thirty and thirty-five years old, apparently unusually young for a pastor at the time.

Set an example (v. 12). In this context, an *example* refers to modeling the characteristics of a mature Christian. Paul encouraged Timothy to be an example in the areas of **speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity**. The apostle Peter similarly urged pastors to set examples for their flocks (1 Pet. 5:3). Godly living in all areas of life models for other believers how they should live. It also serves as a stark contrast to how unbelievers live and thereby can be an effective witness for Christ.

Give your attention (v. 13). To *give . . . attention* means to be concerned or care about something and being in a high state of alertness. With all the chaos surrounding false teachers and false teachings in the Ephesian church, Paul encouraged Timothy to focus his energy upon three things. First, Timothy was to focus on **public reading**, a reference to the reading of Scripture. At this time, the Scriptures would have included the Old Testament and likely the writings of the apostle Paul himself. As a pastor, Timothy would have relied on the Scriptures as the authority by which he could combat false teachings.

Second, Paul encouraged Timothy to focus on **exhortation**. Believers need exhortation from the Scriptures about the tenets of the faith and living the Christian life. Such preaching of the Word appeals to the hearer's will. Hearing the Word is not enough; believers need to obey it.

Finally, Paul encouraged Timothy to focus on **teaching**, which also would have enabled believers to stand firm in the faith and instructed them how to live out the Christian faith. Taken together, reading, exhorting, and teaching would have helped the church stand against false teachers and false teachings.

Don't neglect the gift (v. 14). To *neglect* is to be careless or unconcerned about something. The term for *gift* can refer to a favor bestowed, a benefit given, or an ability granted. It is the word used for spiritual *gifts* (1 Cor. 12:4). Timothy's gift was likely related to the tasks of preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 4:13). God had gifted and called Timothy to preach and teach the Word of God to the Ephesian congregation. He had an obligation to fulfill his calling by exercising his gift with passion and diligence, particularly so that false teachers and false teachings would not gain a firm foothold in the Ephesian church.

The laying on of hands by the council of elders (v. 14). This refers to the public commissioning by the Ephesian church leadership through which they recognized God's calling on Timothy's life (see also 2 Tim. 1:6). The event referenced here may have been similar to the modern practice of ordination. In the New Testament, the church would lay hands upon people as a symbol of their

recognition of God's calling on individuals' lives. The church did this with those chosen to minister to the widows of the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:6), the first missionaries (13:3), and in this passage with a pastor beginning ministry in a church. In addition to public recognition, the laying on of hands can also serve as a gesture of prayer and blessing.

Save both yourself and your hearers (v. 16). Paul encouraged Timothy to remain committed to his calling to preach and teach, living out his faith before the Ephesian congregation (v. 15). Paul's statement that through his perseverance in doing so Timothy would save both himself and his hearers did not mean such actions would merit salvation. Rather, Paul was emphasizing that the sign of genuine faith is perseverance. Those who endure to the end are those who are truly saved (Matt. 24:13). However, people are not saved by enduring; they endure because they are saved. In that endurance, they are also pointing others to Jesus so that they can have the opportunity to hear the gospel, repent of their sins, and place their faith in Christ so as to also be saved.