

# 1 Timothy

## I. Introduction

A. **1 Timothy 4:4-10** . . . For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; [5] for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer. [6] In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. [7] But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; [8] for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. [9] It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. [10] For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

## B. Pray

## II. Four biblically based actions that promote and protect spiritual growth

A. In **vs 6-9**, Paul presents Timothy with four specific exhortations on promoting spiritual growth and protecting spiritual health.

1. Since these exhortations are given to Timothy, many treat them as if they are only for those in ministry – such as elders, pastors, Bible Study leaders, Sunday School teachers, and missionaries.
2. However, it is my opinion that we can apply these four exhortations to ourselves by generalizing their application.
  - a. But it is also my opinion that all of us are engaged in ministry in one way or another, be in the home, with our extended family, in the workplace, or our neighborhood.
  - b. Therefore, I am exhorting you to consider these four exhortations to see what you can learn about promoting your spiritual growth and protecting your spiritual health and the spiritual health of our church.
3. In their simplest form, the four exhortations are:
  - a. **(1)** Get to know God's truth well enough to be able to point it out to those who will listen – especially when they are heading in the wrong direction, or believing a lie, or extolling a teaching that is not supported by the word of God.

- b. **(2)** Continuously feed and nurture yourself on scripture and sound doctrine.
  - c. **(3)** Turn away from secular and religious discussions based on empty, unsupported claims, stubbornly clung to as if they are true – no matter who claims them to be true.
  - d. **(4)** Practice the kind of self-discipline that enables you to **(a)** put off your old sinful nature and replace it with Christ-likeness, **(b)** transform your thinking, **(c)** change your character, and **(d)** produce godly living – day in and day out.
- B. **[6a] (1)** In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus.
- 1. To talk about the truths of God's word to those around you, you must know God's word well enough to convey what you know in ways those listening can understand.
  - 2. To know truths from God's word this well, you must spend time reading God's word, pondering its meaning, considering how to apply it to everyday life, and then putting it into practice – because living according to what you know is the ultimate test of how much you believe it and how well you understand it.
  - 3. There are at least three beneficial outcomes of explaining God's truths and explaining how to apply them to everyday life.
    - a. **First**, it strengthens your understanding of the truth because you have to convey it in a way the listener can understand. To put truth into words that a listener can understand requires some serious thinking on your part – especially if the listener is young or unchurched or has a history of being mistreated or is not accustomed to thinking deeply about such things. This kind of serious thinking on your part reinforces your understanding of the truth and may even improve your understanding as you consider how to make it applicable to the listener.
    - b. **Second**, as you are explaining and applying it to the person listening, it gives you an opportunity to examine how well you are doing at living accordingly. Stating truths clear enough for the listener to understand means you are getting down to the essence of those truths, which in turn makes it easy to evaluate your application of those truths.
    - c. **Third**, talking about what you believe and hold to be true, especially when talking with someone who does not treat God's truths as true, can reinforce your resolve to live accordingly.

4. However, there is an important warning to heed when talking to others about what you know or are learning about God and His word. Beware of pride entering in. In other words, beware of engaging in this activity for the purpose of showing how smart or right or spiritual you are. If that is your motive, you will do serious harm to yourself even as you are hoping to do good to others.
    - a. WHY? Because pride and arrogance of any kind – including a sense of spiritual or intellectual superiority – damages your character, reinforces ungodly attitudes, hardens your heart to those parts of God’s word that call you to humility, and opens the door for the devil to get even more of his way in your life.
    - b. Therefore, it is imperative to speak from a humble heart, to avoid all condescension, and to speak for God’s sake and the well-being of the listener – not your own.
  5. Once again, one way to promote spiritual growth and protect your spiritual health and that of the church is to talk to those around you about the truths of God’s word and how to apply those truths to everyday life.
- C. **[6b] (2)** A second way of promoting spiritual growth and protecting your spiritual health is to constantly nourish yourself on the words of the faith and the sound doctrine which you have been taught.
1. To nourish yourself on the **words of the faith** is to feed on the word of God (*Bible*). And to nourish yourself on **sound doctrine** is to feed on teaching and literature that aptly explains what the Bible says and shows you how to apply it in practical ways to your life.
  2. There is nothing unique or new about this second method. God promoted it with Israel in the Law. David wrote the longest Psalm about it. WHY? Because the word of God is an unmovable truth that enables us to know God, God’s ways, the truth about ourselves, and how to live the Christian life. And when we feed on the word of God, it nourishes us. The Bible itself speaks about this.
    - a. **Hebrews 4:12**, “The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”
    - b. **Psalm 119:105**, “[God’s] word is a lamp to [our] feet and a light to [our] path.”
    - c. **2 Timothy 3:16-17**, “All Scripture is inspired (*supernaturally influenced*) by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for

correction, for training in righteousness; [17] so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

3. Though you have heard this before, I want to remind you that your **purpose** for reading the Bible is as important as reading it.
    - a. In the same way, thinking about and pondering what you read in order to better understand it and make proper use of it is as important as reading it.
    - b. And, figuring out how to apply what you read, and then actually applying it to your beliefs, values, desires, thoughts, words, and deeds is also as important as reading God’s word.
    - c. In other words, reading the Bible is just the first step in nourishing or feeding yourself on what the Bible says. Working at understanding it and applying it is the second step.
    - d. Paul wrote about this in **2 Timothy 2:15**, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth (*in how you live and what you teach*).”
  4. Reading God’s word because that is what Christians are supposed to do – has value, but it cannot compare to the value gained from reading in order to know God more, to learn more about God’s ways, to see yourself more nearly as God sees you, to learn godly ways of dealing with the challenges of life, and to grow in wisdom and insight about how to live the Christian life.
  5. The same goes for Bible doctrine. Right now, I am presenting a form of Bible doctrine in that I am explaining principles from God’s word that you can apply to your life. As with Bible reading, so with Bible doctrine. Listen and read in order to affirm, strengthen, solidify, encourage, and direct your faith in God, your knowledge of God, and the proper ways of living the Christ-like life.
  6. Therefore, a second way to promote spiritual growth and protect your spiritual health and that of the church is to continuously feed and nurture yourself on scripture and sound doctrine.
- D. [7a] **(3)** But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women.
1. According to the NASB’s translation of this verse, Paul appears to discredit worldly fables on the basis that old women engage in such discussions – which in turn seems to discredit old women.
    - a. To debate the negative inferences of Paul’s words here, as translated by the NASB, would require engaging in the very

- thing Paul is warning us against – that is, speculating on what Paul meant because there is no proof one way or the other.
- b. There is nothing in the Bible and only speculation from history as to the kind of worldly fables Paul is referring to and why he showed their worthlessness by attaching them to old women.
  - c. Other Bible translations treat this part of **vs 7** as a warning against two kinds of frivolous, unproductive discussions – those dealing with myths and those dealing with old wives’ tales.
2. Regardless of how we translate **vs 7**, the essence of the warning is to avoid or move away from conversations and discussions about empty, unsupported, exaggerated, and unreasonable claims that are stubbornly clung to and treated as if they are true. And there are at least two reasons for this.
    - a. **First**, such discussions are worthless in that they are of no spiritual or educational or social value.
    - b. **Second**, such discussions include speculation, unverifiable assumptions, misinformation, and emotionally driven thinking and speaking. And they tend to include name calling and ill-will – which often results in some form of division.
    - c. None of these outcomes promotes spiritual growth or protects the spiritual health of the individuals involved. Therefore, as Christians, the wisest thing we can do in relation to such conversations is to avoid them or move away from them should one start in our presence.
  3. Paul makes two additional comments in **2 Timothy** about these kinds of discussions.
    - a. **2 Timothy 2:16**, “But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness.”
    - b. **2 Timothy 2:23**, “But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels.”
  4. Therefore, a third way to promote spiritual growth and protect your spiritual health and that of the church is to stay out of conversations and discussions where the debate is about empty, unsupported, exaggerated, and unreasonable claims that are being treated as if they are true – be the topic biblical, spiritual, political, or otherwise.
- E. **[7b] (4)** On the other hand, discipline yourself (*put in the time and effort necessary to train yourself*) for the purpose of godliness; **[8]** for bodily discipline (*in this context: restricting your diet and/or remaining celibate, though we can apply this principle to far more than those two*

*things*) is only of little profit, but **godliness is profitable for all things**, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

1. In this present life, godliness gives you mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health, which in turn enables you to live a well-rounded, sensible life.
2. In relation to the life to come, godliness in this life properly prepares you for eternity with God.
3. However, there is no possibility of attaining true godliness, that is, the godliness that transforms your heart, mind, beliefs, values, attitudes, desires, thoughts, words, and deeds, apart from the indwelling, the promises, and the comprehensive, all-powerful, all-enabling help of God for such an attainment.
  - a. Yet neither is there a possibility for attaining true godliness apart from us Christians putting in the time, energy, focus, perseverance, and discipline necessary to make progress toward becoming truly godly.
  - b. Without question, God's part is settled and assured. It is always available and He is always ready to do everything He said He would to enable us to become as godly as possible in this life.
  - c. That leaves you and that leaves me as the deciding factor in how far we will travel down the narrow path of the Christian life in pursuit of true godliness.
4. Paul affirms this truth by using a similar contrast between the physical and the spiritual in **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? **Run in such a way that you may win.** (*To run with the intent of winning, you have to train and discipline yourself for days, months, and even years in preparation for the race itself. Then, on race day you have to be focused and mentally ready so that you run in such a way as to win.*) [25] **Everyone** who competes in the games exercises self-control in **all things**. (*Not just some things, but everything that improves the probability of winning.*) They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. [26] Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim (*focused on the finish line and what I have to do to cross it first*); I box in such a way, as not beating the air (*focused on my opponent and how I need to box in order to win*); [27] but I discipline my body and **make it my slave**, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."

5. Paul states this same truth in just two verses in **Philippians 2:12-13**, “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; [13] for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”
6. Therefore, a fourth way to promote spiritual growth and protect your spiritual health and that of the church is to take hold of God, His promises, and His word, and make use of all the help He provides to practice the kind of self-discipline that enables you to (a) put off your old sinful nature and replace it with Christ-likeness, (b) transform your thinking, (c) change your character, and (d) produce godly living – day in and day out.

### III. Conclusion

- A. [9] It (*the statement in vs 8 about the benefits of disciplining yourself for the purpose of godliness – its profitable for all things*) is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. [10] For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.