TRAIN YOURSELF TO BE GODLY

I Timothy 4:7 Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.

Review

I Timothy 4:6 If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching you have received.

These things: things taught by demons through hypocritical liars that hinder people from getting married and trying to enforce the Old Testament dietary laws.

“Minister” is *“diakonos”* which means servant.

Our spiritual nourishment comes from the truths of the faith which in turn comes, in part, through good teaching.

What to Avoid

I Timothy 4:7a(NASB) But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women.

The NIV makes two categories: godless myths and old wives’ tales, the NASB correctly says “fables” (myths) which are worldly(godless) and “fit for old women.” These myths or fables or tales are (KJV) “profane” which Vine’s describes as “that which lacks all relationship or affinity to God.”

“Fit for old women” is literally “old womanish” and refers to things passed on in a culture, usually by mothers to their children, that are presumed to be true by everyone in the culture, but actually are just superstition or myth.

Since Christians realize that some things assumed to be true in our culture are actually just myths without a solid foundation, Christians seem often to be especially susceptible to other myths coming from “Christian” sources.

“The great cosmological myth of the twentieth century.” Michael Denton

Train Yourself to Be Godly

I Timothy 4:7b-8 rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

I Corinthians 9:24-27 (NASB) 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. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

The point is not that physical training is of no value, but that it is not nearly as valuable as training oneself to be godly. A lack of discipline in regard to our physical well-being may bleed over into our spiritual well-being.

How Does One Train Himself to Be Godly

Here and in I Corinthians 9:24-27 Paul deliberately compares training to be godly with physical training, which generally involves doing things we would rather not do so that our body will do the things we want it to do when competing with others. Spiritual training involves doing things we sometimes would rather not do so that when temptation to sin comes or an opportunity to witness or serve others comes, we are ready.

Hebrews 5:11&12 (NASB) Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principle of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

Believers rarely stand still spiritually. They either grow or slip back into spiritual infancy. Believers are expected to grow in their ability to communicate truth.

Hebrews 5:13&14 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

The mature have by practice trained (same Greek word as in I Timothy 4:7) their senses to discern good and evil. Spiritual maturity is much more about learning to make godly choices than it is about acquiring knowledge. In fact, people who do not learn to make godly choices become “dull of hearing” and find it hard to understand spiritual truth.

Hebrews 12:5&6 And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”

Hebrews 12:7-9 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined – and everyone undergoes discipline – then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!

Hebrews 12:10&11 They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

We are trained (same Greek word as in I Timothy 4:7) by responding correctly to discipline.

The first step in discipline is God speaking to our conscience. If we confess our sin, fellowship is restored. (There may still be consequences.) If we don’t listen to God speaking through our conscience, God may speak to us through others or through circumstances.

If we choose to listen to God and do what He says, we train ourselves to distinguish good from evil. If we choose not to listen to God and do what He says we become “dull of hearing,” unable to understand biblical truth and grow spiritually.

2 Peter 1:3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

The Value of Godliness

I Timothy 4:8&9 For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.

Things to Remember

Keep away from godless myths.

Physical training has value.

Training ourselves to be godly has much more value, both in this life and for eternity.

Training to be godly involves both learning to distinguish good from evil (and doing good) and responding correctly to discipline.

God has given us everything we need for a godly life, but disciplining ourselves to make right choices and responding correctly to discipline are both essential if we are to train ourselves to be godly.