

Worship and Formation

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[0 : 0 0] 1 Timothy 4 verses 6 to 11. This is the word of the Lord. If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, Timothy, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. Have nothing to do with a reverent, silly mess. Rather, train yourself for godliness. For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.

For to this end, we toil and strive because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. Command and teach these things. Well, this is the word of God. So, we're in a series on worship. And most of the time in this series, we've been talking about the corporate elements of worship, the things that we do together on a Sunday. But last week, Callum introduced us to the idea of worship Monday to Saturday. So, the Lord's Day, the day that we call Sunday, is fundamental.

It's necessary. It's foundational. But throughout all of church history, member Christians have been thinking about how do you express daily worship? What does that mean? What does it look like? And to answer that, you have to go back to the basics. What's worship? And the way we've defined worship a couple of times in this series is by saying worship is when you ascribe value to something, ascribing love or value to something that you love or adore. The Bible has a pretty particular word for worship of God, ascribing value to God. And that word is to glorify. It's very peculiar to the Bible. The word glorify means to worship. And in 2 Peter chapter 1, Peter says that God has given us gifts for our godliness.

And those gifts for pursuing godliness, he goes on, are for the glory of God. He says, in other words, Peter's getting at this, pursuing godliness, whatever that might mean, is the day to day rhythm of worship because it's for God's glory. So what does worship Monday to Saturday look like? Callum introduced that to us, that idea to us last week. But this week, the answer from 2 Peter and from 1 Timothy is the word godliness. Godliness is the day to day rhythm of worship. So the question is, of course, what is godliness? How do you get godliness? And 1 Timothy 4 gives us an answer to both of those questions. And the answer to those questions, especially how do you get godliness, traditionally, historically, has been called something under the category of spiritual formation. Some people call it formative practices. Some people call it spiritual disciplines. Some people call it spiritual habits, habitual daily acts of worship, all sorts of words that you can use. But spiritual formation is concerned with daily acts of worship that are transforming or forming of your heart. So we're going to look at three things from this passage about godliness.

First, godliness is a command. Second, godliness is formed. And third, godliness is hard. So first, godliness is a command. Paul is writing to Timothy in this book. So it's not a book by Timothy, but it's a letter from Paul to Timothy. And Timothy is a very young pastor, elder in the church, and he was left in Ephesus after Paul planted the church in Ephesus.

[3 : 52] And the context of the passage we read, and basically the whole letter, is that there are people in Ephesus that are basically adding prescriptions or certain ethical codes to the gospel to define what it means to be a Christian. So some of those were that people were saying, if you wanted to be a Christian, you can't be married. In other words, what they're suggesting is that you can't enter into any type of sexual activity if you want to be a Christian. The other thing that they were talking about was that you have to eat certain things if you want to be a Christian and not eat certain things if you want to be a Christian. And Paul is writing this letter and basically right before we enter our text, he says, no, all that stuff is good, by the way. God created it and it's good.

It's good for you to do it, to enter into anything that God created in this world because what he created is good to eat, to drink, all that. So he says, look, be thankful and pray and all of those things will be made holy for you. In other words, it's appropriate for a Christian to engage in the goods of this world as long as you're thankful for them and praying over them. That's his basic idea. Now that's the context, that's the background.

The logic of our passage then is basically this. He's saying, don't be like those guys because the guys that are teaching that kind of stuff who are going around the local church and saying, if you want to be a real Christian, you got to do this and this and this. Those guys don't have godliness. That's basically what he's saying in our passage. So the contrast, you can see it in verse seven. He says, don't listen or don't teach these silly irreverent myths. He says, instead, in the next, train yourself in godliness or in other words, have a good relationship with God. He's talking about doctrinal discernment, the ability to know what's true and what's false, and the ability to do good, to know how to act versus how to not act. He's saying, that's a basic sense of what it means to have godliness.

So he's contrasting the two things. But he says in verse six, tell everyone at Ephesus, what their teaching and what godliness is. Tell everybody the difference in those two things. Then he ups the ante a little bit and he says, in fact, in verse seven, train yourself in godliness. That's a singular, by the way. It's saying, Timothy, you train yourself singular in godliness, not plural. But then even more, verse 11, in case you think you were out of the woods and didn't have to train yourself in godliness because you're not a pastor or elder, like Timothy, he says in verse 11, Timothy, command and teach this to everyone. So three times he goes through that he ups the ante every time.

Look, in other words, what does this mean? What it means is this, Paul has just given a command to the church. Everyone is expected to train themselves in godliness. That's the command. He's saying it's for everybody. He's saying it's not a choice.

[7 : 15] So the question is, what's godliness? Most basically, godliness is another word for holiness. It's the little Greek word here, *usibia*. It means something like reverence or awe in devotion, deep devotion to God. Holiness. Hebrews 12, 14 says, without holiness, no one will see the Lord, which means that the New Testament takes holiness really seriously.

Really seriously. And basically, from this passage alone, you can discern the idea of what he means by godliness. The first thing we've already seen is that what he means is godliness is the ability to discern sound doctrine, as he puts it, which means godliness is at least in part an ability to know the difference in truth, what's true and false, about Jesus, about Christianity. It's a theological education of sorts, it's an ability to know things, to know truth from falsehood. But the second thing that is really clear about godliness throughout all of Paul's letters, you can get from Philippians 2 and other parts of this letter. He connects godliness and Philippians 2 with this command, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for this pleases the Lord.

So the second thing we see is godliness is directly connected to good works, which is in the negative sense, avoiding sin and in the positive sense, doing good deeds, works of mercy, loving your neighbor, loving God, loving neighbor, and doing that in external actions. So far, we know godliness at least is the ability to know what's true, to discern doctrinal truth well. It secondly is the ability or the actions of good works, of avoiding sin and doing good, loving your neighbor. But it's not simply to know something, and it's not simply to do something. Those are both external, those are both externally oriented, but there's an internal sense as well in this passage that's all over the Bible, but it's somewhat covered up a little bit in this passage, a third sense, and it's in verse 6. In verse 6, he says, if you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of

Christ Jesus, and then the little verb, being trained in the words of the faith. Now, in verse 7, he says, the command is train yourself in godliness, and in verse 6, you have the same word, being trained in the words of the faith, but it's not the same word. So the N-A-V and the N-A-S-B translate differently because the S-V chose to use the word train, but the actual word there is the word, you will be nourished. So if you do these things, if you pursue godliness, if you teach about this, he's saying you will be nourished. Now, what does it mean to be nourished? To be nourished, it's a metaphor, right? Being nourished is a metaphor, and being nourished doesn't mean just knowing something with your intellect or acting out something. Being nourished means that you actually thirst and hunger for something.

In other words, being nourished means you were thirsty or you were hungry, and that thirst and that hunger has been quenched, you see? So in other words, learning sound doctrine and doing good is part of godliness, good things. But what he's saying is that true godliness is done in such a way as that when you know, learn about God or pursue God, knowledge of God and do good works, it says if you're drinking water in the middle of the desert. That's the internal sense of godliness. It's not mere knowledge or mere action, but it's the experience of God in knowing and acting, you see? And that's why we read Psalm 63 in the first reading. Psalm 63, one of the great Psalms of David, is deeply experiential, and it's the Old Testament's center passage of what it means to be godly. In the Old Testament, this is David. Oh, God, you are my God. Earnestly, I seek you. My soul thirsts for you. My flesh faints for you as in a dry and weary land. Now, this is language of thirst and hunger and quenching, right? And it's got God as its object. It's deeply experiential. It's experiencing God. This is the sense of godliness from David. But the other thing to notice is that this is covenantal language. So we talked about this last week in terms of the crucifixion when Jesus cries out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? That was covenantal language. This is covenantal language. You see, he says at the beginning, oh, my God, my God. This is the language of the Abrahamic covenant. It's when God came to Abraham and said, I will be your God. You will be my people. You will call me my God and I will call you my people. You know what this means? This means that when David's out in the desert of the soul, hungering for God in godliness, deep experiences with God, deep desire for

[12 : 36] God, the only way that he's doing that is because he's already been found by God. You see, this is the language of the covenant. It means he's already been called one of God's people. He's already been found by God. In other words, what he's saying to God is, I will seek you because I have been found by you. I will seek you because I've been found by you. In other words, godliness for Paul, godliness for David is not a search for God where you, it's not being spiritual. It's not the modern 21st century sense of spirituality where you're just seeking after the transcendent or something like that. It's more specific than that. It's not a search for God for the first time where you find God, but it's the cultivation of desire for the God who has already found you. In other words, you can't have godliness without the gospel. You can't have godliness without the gospel. That's why in our passage in 1 Timothy, right before he says, Timothy and all the people, train yourself in godliness, he mentions in just the passage before that in chapter 3 verse 16, he talks about the mystery of godliness. In other words, what's the mystery or the revelation behind your ability to be godly, to pursue God, to be holy, to want God, right? And this is the mystery of godliness. This is what he says. 3 16, he was manifested in the flesh, indicated by the spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up into glory. In other words, what's the mystery that stands behind the ability to be godly? Jesus Christ humiliated. That's his answer. That's the background that he's giving. In other words, Jesus Christ, he's saying, was humiliated in order that God would find you, in order that you would seek him. See? Jesus Christ was exalted in order that in him you would be found by God, and you would turn and you would seek God. So the basic idea of godliness is seeking after God, but it's doing so walking on the ground of the Gospel. So the Christian life, this is the Christian life. The Christian life is the pursuit of godliness, Paul is saying, and it's where you walk on the ground of the Gospel.

The Gospel is the floor that you're walking on. Without it, you would fall. But it's looking up to a horizon that stands off in the future, and that horizon is God himself. You see, godliness is not just a knowing things about God. It's not simply doing good deeds, but what he's saying is that in both knowing and doing, you're deeply desiring, hungering and thirsting. That God is the only thing that can satisfy, that can nourish the thirst and the hunger that you feel deep down in the pit of your stomach. That's how he's describing godliness. Now, are you hungry? Are you thirsty? Are you hungry or are you thirsty for God?

One of the deep evidences of being found by God is being hungry and thirsty for God. It's what the text is teaching here. Do you desire him? Do you desire him? But even if you feel God is cold and absent, even if you feel God is cold and absent and your heart is far from him, does it bother you at all? Does it hurt? Do you want him back? Do you want him back?

Godliness too means you're seeking godliness, the simple desire for him, even if he's cold, even if he's distant, even if it feels like he's far off. So the question then becomes how do we get there? How do we develop desire for God? How do we get to that horizon? And that brings us to the second point. The second point is this, godliness is formed. In other words, the gospel is not something you do, but something done for you, Christ for you.

[17 : 02] But godliness is something you do. Godliness is something you do, something you pursue, something you have to be trained in. It works out by the Spirit, but it is something that you do, that you engage in. How do we become people who want God, who worship Monday to Saturday and are affections for God? And the answer throughout all of church history, throughout all the great theologians and our confessions and things like that is that we do have to work at it. Walking on the ground of the gospel, not legalism, but we have to work at it.

Now what is it? So the word in this passage that points us to that is the word train in verse 7, train yourself in godliness. This is something you're being called to act on, right? What does the word train mean? What does it mean to train in godliness? Now you know this Greek word, the Greek word is gimnazio, G-Y-M, gimnazio. It's the word, root word for where we get gym or gymnasium from, right, today. And what do you do at a gym? What do you do at a gymnasium, right? You train, you work out. This morning I was publicly shamed for being an advocate of CrossFit by our dear brother and leader. I'm just kidding. But tonight I'm vindicated, right? Because train, gimnazio, there it is. Seriously though, in verse 9, in verse 8, this is, he makes it, he couldn't make it any clearer, in verse 8. Verse 8 is a proverb. He says, for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way as it holds promise for the present life and also the life to come. Now this is, this is a proverb from the first century. While bodily training is of some value, and different words have been used in the proverb and other Greek texts, godliness is of value in every way. He's quoting there from a kind of proverbial saying that was floating around at the time. And what he's saying is this, athletics, which requires daily practices, is valuable. Training your body, he's saying, is valuable. It's got some value to it. But training in godliness, same word, gimnazio, gimnazio, is of much more value because while the former is just pertaining to your physical body, which will die eventually, godliness extends beyond the grave. It goes beyond death. It's of much more value than simple physical training. That's what he's saying. So you can see, I mean, Paul draws very direct, strikingly, that training in righteousness or godliness has a relationship to the way you would train your body at the gym. And what he's saying is this, he's talking about daily habitual spiritual practices that we're called to. Now, Callum hinted at this last week because our word for godliness here is the word I just mentioned, eusebia. But a lot of times you'll see the word eusebia just translated as worship. And it can be translated just as worship. But there are all sorts of different words that can be translated worship in Greek.

In English, we only have one word that really means worship and it's worship. But in Greek, there's all sorts of them. And here you get eusebia, which means something more like deep desire for God, all reverence and devotion to God. But Callum pointed out last week, another word, Enrollments 12.1, where Paul says, present your bodies as a living sacrifice.

This is your spiritual form of worship, right? And that's a different word. It's not eusebia, it's the word latrĩa. And the word latrĩa, and Callum pointed this out, is a word that comes from the Old Testament idea of the practices of a priest. When a priest goes into the temple and he performs daily practices, he has to light the candles, he has to do the sacrifices, he has to cook, he has to do all sorts of things. That's the word latrĩa. In other words, these are the daily sacrifices of praise is the word that's been adopted, that a priest was called to, daily practices, you see. And what Paul is saying is that now you're a priest, if you're in Christ, you're a priest, and you've also been called to daily sacrifices of praise. That's what he's saying. Now they're not the same thing as the priests of the Old Covenant. Yours are completely different. Jesus has made, He's put away that type of priesthood. But the point is that he's saying in both Romans 12 and in 1 Timothy 4 that we are called to these daily practices. He uses the metaphor of working out like an athlete in 1 Timothy 4, and he uses the idea of the priest, like a priest who goes into every day faithfully into the temple, doing their daily morning practices at the temple in Romans chapter 12. So, of course, the question that we're throwing back again, how, what are these practices?

What does the Bible teach us about what this looks like? How do we shape our desire for God in specific ways, and what do these practices look like? These New Covenant priestly practices.

[22 : 24] Well, look, the answer's simple, really. I mean, it's the same thing every preacher always says. It's a duh kind of an answer, but prayer in Scripture, right? Prayer in Scripture, that's the New Testament formula. But when you attach prayer in Scripture reading to godliness, it takes on a slightly different form than what we're might be used to normally, because when you attach it to godliness, prayer is not, prayer for the sake of godliness, for deep desire for God is not simply petitionary prayer. So it's not just prayer that's prayer for me's, for me's prayer, things for me. It's actually, it's more prayer that enjoys God in prayer, that rests in God while you pray. In other words, it's prayer that's reflective and meditative on God's person, on who he is and what he's done, on his great and mighty works. It's prayer that really seeks to ask God to enjoy God. That's more of the sense of prayer connected to this idea of godliness. It's the prayer that asks for deep desire for him. It's prayer that asks to be hungry and thirsty. Same thing with

Scripture. You know, tons of the church fathers and our fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters in the faith before us have all reflected on this a lot. And one of the things you see pretty consistent throughout church history is that Scripture reading as a formative practice of training and godliness takes on more of the sense of Scripture reading as prayer than it does simply Scripture reading as information gathering. So it's not simply Scripture reading that's there for content to learn what happened and what this might mean and all this. There is a time and place for that. And of course, we're doing some of that now. But with respect to godliness and spiritual practices, that type of Scripture reading daily Scripture reading is priority. Number one is as worship. So it's it's praying the text, praying the text back to God, reflecting on God as you read about God and praying it back to God. That's the main sense throughout history that people have gathered of praying and reading Scripture in relation to godliness. But there's there's a lot more practices.

God uses other people as iron sharpens iron. So one man sharpens another God uses individual habitual practices as well. One of the great examples of a person who's thought a lot about this and a place that's done a lot of work on just developing day in and day out relationship with God was John Calvin. And when he came over from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism and he became the pastor in Geneva in Switzerland, he he he what he realized was that he needed to change things that had happened in the Roman Catholic Church in the past, especially in the monasteries or the monastic communities and did not simply throw it all out but to take what was true and what was good and what was best and to in a way democratize it. So for instance, the monasteries, the monastic orders, right, they were every single day they were deeply devoted in those monasteries to praying, to working with their hands, right, to studying the scriptures, to memorizing the Psalms, like all good things, right. But

Calvin said but they shouldn't have gone and left society and become monks to do it. So in other another words, he said, we're going to democratize this. And we're going to put in these practices for our people here in Geneva, but we're going to make it for everybody.

It's not there's no clergy, laity distinction here. These practices are for every single person. And so Calvin did all sorts of things. I mean, he one of the things Calvin did that will not be anything crazy to you is that he put pews in to the church. So prior to the Reformation, there weren't pews in churches or chairs or anything because people stood around and basically like just kind of chatted while the priest did their thing. Because you weren't involved. You didn't even take the Lord's supper, the Eucharist. I mean, you just hung out and chatted and left kind of whenever it was all done. It was all in Latin anyway. So you might not have understood it if you weren't educated. Calvin put pews in and he said, we're going to be devoted to learning what the Bible says to praying the Bible, to having daily practices. And one of the most important things he did is that our own tradition, the Westminster tradition followed after was that he wrote a catechism for his people, a form of question and answer of learning about theology and about God.

[27 : 23] And in the catechism, he also put in what's called a daily office, which is kind of an older way of saying a daily program for prayer and Bible study. And that they distributed to everybody in the city. And in the daily office, it wasn't super programmatic, but it just had suggestions. It said things like pray five times a day, pray when you wake up, pray at every meal, pray the Lord's prayer and your own prayer in the morning while you read the Bible, that kind of thing. So that was Calvin's daily office. But following on from Calvin's tradition, tons of people have developed this kind of a thing. One of the most famous, and I'll just list a couple resources here because we don't have, I can't expose it, all these different practices that I'm about to list that would take a whole series.

But this is just an introduction. Don Whitney is probably the most famous theologian today that and pastor that's reflected on developing as a person who is spiritually disciplined.

So he has a book called Spiritual Disciplines. And here's all the things that he lists that he sees in the New Testament of spiritual disciplinary practices or spiritual formation practices. Bible reading, prayer. There's a chapter on each of these. Bible reading, prayer, praying the Bible, worship corporate individual and family, worship purposeful evangelism, mercy acts of mercy acts of service in the church, stewardship with all sorts of different resources, not just money, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling and writing, education, learning or biblical and doctrinal development and catechism, catechesis. And other people that have talked a lot about this, you can go early, go to St. Augustine and his confessions, Jonathan Edwards, Religious Affections is a great book to look at. But in the modern world, easier is Don Whitney, Spiritual Disciplines or Eugene Peterson also, very helpful. The point is this, there's no one right way. There's no one right way.

That was one of the things that the Reformers were upset about is that there's no one right way to live godliness and to develop, train in godliness day to day. But the text here, 1 Timothy 4, gives a command and it says that you must pursue it. You must walk down the road of spiritual disciplines. Okay, so last point and very brief. Godliness is hard and I'll just be brief here. So we have to train godliness. We see this from Paul in verse 10. He says, we toil, we labor, we suffer, we strive. Why? Because this is eternally valuable. He says, Eugene Peterson in one of his books, he puts the whole kind of picture we've been painting this way. The person who looks for quick results in the seed planting of well-doing and godliness will be disappointed. If I want potatoes for dinner tomorrow, it will do me little good to go out and plant potatoes in my garden tonight. There are long stretches of darkness and invisibility and silence that separate planting from reaping.

During the stretches of waiting, there is cultivating and weeding and nurturing and planting still of other seeds. In other words, he's saying that there's cultivating and deep desire for God requires deep commitment to long-term spiritual practices for the Christian.

[30 : 57] That's part of the Christian life. That's what he's saying. So a few aspects of practical advice about this very briefly. And these are things off cold from other people just this week, just from reading different guys on this. First, Jesus Christ died for us.

So that means you don't have to hold on to guilt about not pursuing godliness in your day-to-day life. You don't have to hold on to that guilt. Jesus killed it on the cross.

He crucified it. But he's calling us to indeed confess and repent of ways that we've neglected this aspect of the Christian life and to change. The second thing is this very briefly. The day in and day out habits of spirituality, of pursuing this stuff is not, we want to go completely different from what they did in monasticism. We want to say that doing this is helpful for us to be subversive in the culture that we exist in. In other words, what it means to be a subversive Christian is that in your daily life, you enter into the world, you go to work, you're hanging out with your neighbors, whatever, and you're taking on what Eugene Peterson calls the coloration of the culture. In other words, you take on some of the color of the culture. But he's saying, well, if you lose the coloration of the culture, if you stop entering into culture and spending time with people that aren't like you in culture, then you lose effectiveness in ministry. But at the same time, if you enter into the culture without daily habits of spiritual formation, without desire for God, then you also start to be conformed to the culture instead of an agent that transforms it. In other words, he's saying daily spiritual habits, growing in godliness, training yourself in godliness is one of the primary ways that we become culture subverters. In other words, showing people another way in the cultures we exist in, a way of truth, a way of life, the way of the cross and the resurrection. Okay, thirdly out of four, what kills spiritual discipline? Very briefly, what kills spiritual disciplines? Ruining your appetite for God by being conformed to the things of the world. In other words, idolatry ruins your appetite for spiritual disciplines. Sex, money and power, those are the three that sum up the whole shebang. Sex, money and power. In other words, these things are good. We've just heard that from Paul, sex, money and power. Sorry, a while she left out power, probably sex and money at least. These things are good things, but they give you highs, but if they become ultimate, they'll ruin your appetite. They'll become things that you hunger and thirst for ultimately, and that ruins, that makes it very difficult to have deep desire for God as ultimate. The other things that can subvert or kill our ability to be spiritual discipline, boredom, busyness and lack of rest. If you're pretty idle and pretty bored in life, oftentimes it's hard to do anything when you're bored. But on the flip side, busyness, and busyness is probably the thing that's much more of a problem for all of us. Stop being busy.

Half joke, but seriously, stop being busy. In other words, be un-busy. How do you be un-busy? Well, the one way to help yourself be un-busy is to use your calendar for spiritual discipline. The calendar is sacrosanct. It's holy, it's set apart, meaning when you put something down on it, it's there. Whenever somebody comes and says, do this, do this, do this, you say, can't do it. I got my calendar here, and it says no. Spiritual discipline is put them on the calendar, set time apart. I've got an excellent illustration from Moby Dick about that, but we don't have time for it, so I'm going to skip it.

Then lastly, when you're just starting out and getting involved in spiritual and training for godliness, be brief. Brevity is longevity. Pray brief prayers. Read briefly, day to day. Don't try to do big, long things. Just be as brief as possible. We'll just close with this. We had a call to worship from Matthew 11, 28-29, and it really epitomizes the whole of what we're talking about here. Jesus says, come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. That's the gospel. That's Jesus saying, come to the cross, come and die with me, come and live with me in resurrection. That's the gospel. Then he says, take my yoke upon you and learn from me. He's called you to the ground of the gospel and then said, now put my yoke upon you. It's much lighter than the yoke of good works that you've been pursuing. It's the yoke of godliness. It's light. It's easy. It's not a burden. It's rest. It's deep desire for the only thing that you were created to live for. Our hearts are restless until we have rest in God. That's godliness. That's St. Augustine. So this is a call to pursue the gospel-grounded yoke of godliness, our call to worship tonight. Let's pray. Father, we come before you knowing that we've been so inadequate in pursuing you and your face. You've caught us to seek your face because we've been found by you, if we've been found by you. So we pray, oh Lord, tonight that you would give us deep desire to pursue you and that we would know that being committed to daily practices of worship is, in fact, one of the means that you've given us to develop desire for you. We know that it's so hard for us, Lord. It's so unnatural. So we ask that you would change us and point us in that direction. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.