

SESSION 2

GODLINESS

Leader pages on pp. 142-145

THE POINT:
A GODLY LIFE POINTS
OTHERS TO CHRIST.

1 TIMOTHY 4:6-16

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.

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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.

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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.**

MEMORY VERSE

KEYWORDS

The words . . . faith (v. 6)—The phrase refers to the gospel, salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone.

Pointless . . . myths (v. 7)—Pointless refers to gnostic teachings that claimed to have secret truths available only to a select few initiated into the group.

Set an example (v. 12)—Refers to modeling the characteristics of a mature Christian.

Give your attention (v. 13)—to be concerned or care about something, being in a high state of alertness with all the chaos surrounding false teachers and false teachings in the Ephesian church.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO LIVE A GODLY LIFE?

You can tell a lot about people when you visit their homes. When the mantle is lined with sports trophies and the walls are adorned with ribbons, you can tell the person is into sports. Walls covered with framed pictures of kids point to a person for whom family takes precedence.

What in our homes points to a love for Jesus? 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.

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

Prioritized By Christ //

1 Timothy 4:6-8

First Timothy is a letter written by Paul to his young protégé, Timothy. The seasoned veteran

of the gospel had assigned his younger colleague the task of leading a church in the ancient city of Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3). Essentially, he was to direct the attention of the members of that congregation to the "things" that really mattered. These "things" (mentioned eleven times in the letter), were mostly related to Paul's teachings, God's revealed truth, also known as Scripture (v. 18).

The challenge given to Timothy was to be a "good servant of Christ Jesus." Being good was going to require him to be godly. How does that happen?

Godliness is the by-product of good spiritual health. Timothy would need to be "nourished" with the "sound teaching . . . that promotes godliness" (6:3). The "good" teaching would shape the character of the "good" (i.e. godly) servant (v. 6).

A crucial ingredient in godliness is a God-centered orientation to every part of life. In its essence this virtue of godliness requires me to look at all earthly situations from a heavenly perspective. Paul knew Timothy could be godly because of his embrace of the teaching of Scripture.

The sound teaching that Timothy had followed was in contrast with some "pointless and silly myths." We can speculate about some of the types of



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false teaching with which Timothy had to contend. 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.** This one seems okay. 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 and myself, I shouldn't simply throw up my hands and say, "Well, that's just who I am."
- **Follow your heart.** While shopping for a birthday card, 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 ge-along approach to life in day-to-day activities and ignore a higher calling and pursuit.

Once we've come to value godly character above other considerations, then we're all good, correct? Actually, that's not the case. We must then begin training ourselves in godliness.

The word used for "training" in verse 8 is a Greek verb *gumnazo*, and we derive our word "gymnasium" from it. Godliness requires effort on our part. No one finds it accidentally. As we take truth from God's Word into our minds and submit our inclinations to its instructions, we become godlier in our character.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS WE CAN TRAIN OURSELVES IN GODLINESS?

Paul gave Timothy an excellent reason why a godly life should be a priority. It would benefit him—as it does us as well—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 that I'm living now, and it also prepares me for what comes after death.

Anchored In Christ // 1 Timothy 4:9-11

What we ultimately value is what we believe will be there for us in the end. There are things in which we put our trust because we are convinced that they will 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 in the days ahead. This was a "go-to" phrase for



DIGGING DEEPER ONE LIFE CHANGES ANOTHER

In the Book of Ruth, Naomi came from people that knew God. Famine sent her, her husband, and her two sons to a foreign land, where foreign gods were worshiped. After tragedy struck and Naomi lost her husband and two sons, she decided to return home. She could not provide for her daughters in law, so she instructed them to return home to their people. Naomi's daughter in law Ruth refused to leave her and told her, "For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God" (Ruth 1:16). Ruth could have only focused on herself and left Naomi on her own. However, she did not leave Naomi to fend for herself. Ruth remained with her mother-in-law and received her guidance and direction. Clearly, Naomi carried herself in a way that led Ruth to choose to follow her to an unknown land and unknown future.

How does your life point others to Christ?

Paul in the writings of his later years. While used partially in some places, the full statement used is “This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance” (1 Tim. 4:9).

Because of hope, we are willing to “labor,” which means exactly what it sounds like it means. Developing godliness requires work on our part. Think of it as effort extended over time. Anyone can work hard for a minute. And nearly anyone can give a mediocre effort in an ongoing manner. Doing both is more challenging.

Then we must add to this labor a commitment to “strive,” which reminds us that attaining godliness is a struggle. There are numerous obstacles in this path to becoming like God Himself. We can look in the mirror to find one of the biggest ones. And we can look out the window at the world around us to find an equally daunting example.

Paul took Timothy—and he takes us—back to the crucial virtue of hope in the living God (v. 10). All the labor and struggle expended in the present toward godliness is fueled by a belief that they matter in the future. This type of spiritual vision is hope.

Someday we will stand before God who gave us life—including talents, resources, opportunities—and we will give an accounting of how we used all those things. The best response to the question, What did you do with all that was given to you? might be the old saying: “What you are is God’s gift to you, and what you become is your gift to God.”

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.” 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.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE CHRIST-CENTERED HOPE TO A NON-BELIEVER?

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.

Points Others To Christ //

1 Timothy 4:12-16

While having a future perspective is important, life is lived out in the present. Paul had words for Timothy related to the here and now, not just the sweet by and by.

The “things” that Timothy needed to grasp—holding on to good teaching, rejecting falsehood, striving for godliness—were also what he needed to pass on to others. Paul called him to teach others. The same is true for us. We need to seek to influence others in the truth of Scripture and Christian living. But there is a crucial



component that must accompany our words of encouragement.

What Paul asked Timothy to do in the church at Ephesus was be a faithful guide, a good example, a worthy pattern for godliness. In a later letter that he wrote to his young mentee, he acknowledged that he had been a spiritual Sherpa guide for Timothy: “But you have followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance” (2 Tim. 3:10).

So, what might discourage us from setting a godly example for others? Paul brought up the issue of Timothy’s age when he wrote, “Don’t let anyone despise your youth.”

Many of the congregants in Ephesus were older than Timothy; thus, the possibility existed that he would be marginalized and not taken seriously. As

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a young pastor, I remember one of my members telling me in a teasing manner, "Preacher, I have socks older than you!" Who knows? Maybe he did.

Some of those 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.

A godly life, regardless of its age, can point others to live a godly life as well.

HOW DOES OUR GODLINESS HELP POINT OTHERS TO CHRIST?

DID YOU KNOW?

Living like Christ comes at a personal cost. When we turn away from the patterns of the world to live out our faith, people may push back and have questions. What happens when communities are changed for Christ and larger numbers of people seek to align their lives to the ways of the Lord? While this pleases God and we can imagine the angels rejoicing, this can upset the status quo and make some people pretty upset. Early in the Book of Acts, revival breaks out and thousands come to Christ. In Acts 19:24-27, a local silversmith, Demetrius, who made silver shrines to gods, realizes that he is losing income because of people turning to serve the one true God. Demetrius gathered businessmen and incited a riot that caused great confusion among the people. As you share your faith, be prepared for backlash that you, and others, may face as people leave the patterns of this world to follow Jesus.

Biblical Truth: To live for Christ, we must die to our personal wants and needs.

How can you encourage those who suffer persecution for following Jesus?

LIVE IT

How can I live a godly life that points others to Christ?

If we were to survey the average American about good character, it is possible they would note the character traits we will be looking at in sessions 3-6 of this study. But would godliness appear on their lists? For the follower of Christ, godliness comes first, for it is through godliness that the other character traits come.

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- **Examine yourself.** Look for godly examples in your devotional readings and Bible studies. Examine your life and compare how you are living out those godly examples. Pray and ask God to help you live more like Christ.
- **Challenge yourself.** Think about the biggest obstacles that hinder your pursuit of godliness. Consider ways to address those obstacles. Write down steps you can take to overcome them.
- **Take Inventory.** Make a list of the people upon whom you have, either by word or action, exerted a positive influence. Celebrate how God has used you in the lives of others and pray for more opportunities to represent Christ to others.

DAILY READINGS

1. CHILL WITH THE CHATTER // 1 TIMOTHY 4:6-8

When Paul instructed Timothy to stay away from pointless and silly myths, it is really one word in the Hebrew that can be translated as godless, worthless, or profane. The world has limited profanity to just curse words. However, biblical speaking, profanity can also be defined as godless and worthless talk. Things like gossip, rumors, innuendos and even some of our opinions, would all fall within the category of profanity. Remember, we are called to a higher standard than the world's standards. Now that you know profanity is more inclusive than you once thought, has profane speech come out of your mouth recently? If it has, repent and pray to the Lord,

"Lord, set up a guard for my mouth; keep watch at the door of my lips" (Ps. 141:3).

2. A HEALTHY HOPE // 1 TIMOTHY 4:9-11

In his 1988 presidential campaign at the Democratic National Convention, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who up to that point had come closer to the White House than any other African American, ended his speech, "Keep hope alive."¹¹ "Hope" came to represent Barak Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. However, hope in hope is hope in nothing. Hope in people, places, or things is uncertain and unsure. But "we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe." Whatever troubles, trials, or tribulations you're facing, don't put your hope in hope, but put your hope in God.

"My hope is built in nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness."¹²

3. AGE DOESN'T COUNT // 1 TIMOTHY 4:12-16

Age means nothing to the Ancient of days. Joseph was a teenager. Both Samuel and David were young boys. Mary was a young girl. You are never too young (or old) to be called and used by God and to be an example of what it is to follow Christ. What does matter to God is maturity and immaturity,

both of which transcend age. Immaturity can exist in the elderly, just as maturity can exist in the youth. How do we cultivate maturity regardless of age? We mature in the faith by habitually studying God's Word and applying it to our lives, exercising our spiritual gifts, and being attentive to how we conduct ourselves.

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping your word" (Ps. 119:9).

4. GOD AGAINST US? // JAMES 4:6-7

Romans 8:31 asks, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The answer: God. When we are prideful, we make ourselves vulnerable to Satanic attack. God will oppose that attitude to humble us, so that His grace can then exalt us above our enemy. David says, "Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me" (Ps. 27:6). Recognizing it's God's grace that exalts us, in humility and gratefulness, we in turn, exalt him. "Oh, magnify the Lord with me; and let us exalt his name together" (Ps. 34:2-3).

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

5. LOVE LIFTED ME // 1 JOHN 3:16-18

There's an old hymn, "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more. But the master of the sea heard my despairing cry, from the waters lifted me, now safe am I. Love lifted me!"¹³ But the love that lifted us is meaningless if we don't lift others in return. John says it's heartless love. James calls it dead faith (Jas. 2:14-17). Both love and faith are action words. How many times have we walked by someone needy and failed to help with the excuse, "I don't know what they'll do with the money," when we had no intention of helping in the first place? Who do you know that is currently in need? If you have it, give it.

The love of God received, must be love shared. It's too good to keep it to ourselves.