

# 1 Timothy 4:6-8

By  
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**"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. But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; 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."**

## Introduction

We gather around 1 Timothy 4 starting in verse 6—we'll introduce our topic this morning—well, we come to this particular portion in 1 Timothy 4 and the topic that is discussed here is the issue of godliness. In fact this morning, if we can give it a title, the title of the message would be "The Priority of Godliness."

The term "**godliness**" or *eusebeia* (εὐσεβεία) in the Greek occurs 15 times in the New Testament and of the 15 times that it occurs, 13 of them are in the Pastoral Epistles (i.e. 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus). In those three Pauline letters, 13 out of 15 times the term "godliness" is used in all the New Testament, 13 out of 15 occur there in those letters and of those 13 times, 9 of those occur just in this first letter to Timothy. So, to say that the concept of godliness is a central theme in 1 Timothy would be a slight understatement. I mean clearly, if the concept of godliness has any bearing on the New Testament, it seems to all focus in *this* particular epistle and that's the topic that we address this morning.

We talked about it already (because the word has already come up in a couple of contexts as we've been studying through 1 Timothy). "**Godliness**" has the meaning of "**right or good religion.**" Now, we might be tempted to think it examines this idea of external piety, that it has more to do with what we put on externally than what we are on the inside, but that is not the way that Paul uses it. In fact, if you kind of examine the entire body of this concept, especially in the pastoral epistles of Paul, what you find is that this concept of godliness is *what we are on the inside that flows to the outside* that is complete and thorough in us. It means that we are so thoroughly immersed in the desire to be like unto God in holiness, in conduct, in purity, etc., that it displays itself. It is important for us to understand that it is worship that bleeds out into obedience and makes us doers of the Word, not just hearers of the Word.

It's a wonderful and important concept and one that is central to our thinking today. In fact, I'll give you an idea of it because somehow it has lost its meaning among us. You know Christians; we speak with that kind of Christianese-talk. We call each other "brother" or call each other "sister," but there is an element in us to where sometimes we overuse a concept or word to the point that it starts to lose its sensibility. The terms "godly" or "godliness" is another one of those examples. "Oh, that man is godly. That woman is godly." We are not exactly sure what in the world we mean anymore. We certainly don't mean that they are deity-like in that they have some crazy, tremendous power or that they share in God's omnipotence, right? We don't mean anything like that, so what does it exactly mean?

Now, I think it might be easier for us if we start to think of godliness in terms of Christ-likeness. Now, that's the concept in a nutshell; that we are so worshipful of Christ and of our living God that we actually become and take on the characteristics that would be most like unto our Savior, Himself—that's the concept of true godliness.

As we look at this particular portion of scripture this morning (verses 6 to 10), we ask that the Lord would open up our hearts to understand His holy Word. Let's pray and ask that the Holy Spirit would bless this time around the Holy Scriptures.

*Heavenly Father,*

*We just ask that You would honor our desire to understand and worship You properly because of Your Word this morning.*

*We ask that Your Holy Spirit would have His excellent work, as He always does, in taking the Word of God and making it understandable to us and sanctifying us by the power of the washing of the Word.*

*And I pray Lord this morning, that we would be open to the instruction that is given to us, that we might find ourselves challenged then, that we would be encouraged to seek out Lord, a godlier, a more sensible, a more thorough Christ-likeness in the manner in which we live.*

*Father, help those who minister the Word in the church, including myself. Help us to be good servants of godliness, a good servant to the Word of God, to nourish and to build up the faith that is amongst us.*

*And I just pray Lord, that our church would stand for truth and it would stand for truth in the most gracious of ways and that it would understand the doctrine of all things that pertain to life and godliness and that we might live in a manner that is honoring to the God who has saved us from our own sins.*

*We just praise you Lord and ask that you would bless us this morning.*

*In Christ's name,  
Amen.*

We had finished last week talking about some of the heretics; the heretical teachers that had come up in the church at Ephesus. That's the reason why Paul had left Timothy there that he might address these men and put down the falsehood generated by them. He addressed those individuals who were forbidding marriage, abstaining from certain foods as men full of hypocrisy. They were liars. They were seared in their conscience and without feeling. These were the individuals that were teaching falsehood and Timothy was to stand up against them.

#### **The Priority of Godliness: The Minister of Godliness (v. 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."**

And so in the midst of this instruction, Paul says "That's what they are Timothy. This is what you are to be." So, the first point that Paul makes (in verse 6) is to point out that a good minister desires to see godliness in others; a minister of godliness. Verse 6 says this:

*"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."*

Paul reminds Timothy that his role is that of the teacher or the guardian of the truth. Many of our English translations will kind of read like it's a conditional clause (if you are not reading from the NASB); e.g. "If you point these things out to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus." However, I think the NASB translates this verse appropriately, especially in the context. Notice at the end of verse 6 the statement "*which you have been following.*" Timothy was *already* an excellent servant of Christ. He was already a "**good servant.**"

In fact, that term for "**good**" or **kalos** (καλός) comes up quite frequently in the Pastoral Epistles. We said that that word has the idea of good not versus evil, but good which is noble, excellent. Timothy was superb. He was a good minister; an excellent servant. He was in the service of Christ Jesus and he had been doing a good job.

It is not an "if," but rather, it is "as you continue to do that." It is "by means of." He is saying, "By pointing these things out to the brethren, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ." By pointing what things out? Well, if we track back a couple of verses, it says in verse 4:

*"For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude;"*

Remember, Paul was contradicting what these false teachers were saying and we said that in any given circumstance, religious error falls under two camps:

- 1) **Liberty:** That which is licensed meaning that the grace of God means that I can do whatever I want; once saved always saved. It's the attitude that says, "No one should ever tell me that I need discipline to do all these things. It's all legalism and they should all leave me alone."
- 2) **Legalism:** Legalism is obviously a "Hey, you need to do this and you need to do that. You need to avoid at all costs these things and if you do not do these things, you are not a good and righteous individual." External religion versus a go-with-the-flow-with-everything-is-all-right spirituality.

We titter in the balance both of these things. It's easy for all false religions to fall into one or the other category: "everything is okay and we should all get along" or "nobody is okay unless you do the following." We need to avoid these excesses.

Now having discussed this, remember that the particular heresy in the church of Ephesus at this time happened to be that men were forbidding marriage (according to verse 3) and encouraging individuals to abstain from certain foods.

Last week, we said that when we looked at that charge carefully we asked ourselves whether singleness is a good and excellent thing from the Scriptures. Of course! First Corinthians 7 says so. There is an advantage in singleness. But do the Scriptures ever suggest that marriage is not a good thing? That even the sexual union in marriage is something that is to be abased ought not to touch or discuss? Not at all.

Consider how it was the Puritans who developed and properly brought back that sense of what it means to enjoy the gifts of God in this world and to do that unto His glory. Are we to abstain from foods by way of fasting and prayer? No! It's encouraged in the Scriptures, but not commanded. To say that we are to abstain from those things (in a legalistic way) is folly and sin.

And so, the thing that Paul is saying to Timothy (the thing that he wants him to point out to these brethren in particular) is that there is a great freedom in the things of God and that freedom comes because God is a good God. As a result, we are not to deny His goodness (verse 4) because everything created by God is good. It can be tainted and abused by sin, but God had nevertheless created it and intended it for good.

We talked about all the crazy ascetics. We talked about the different monks. We talked about the monk who sat up by a jutting stone that he might lean against it so he couldn't fall asleep. And you may have thought, "Oh, how godly." We talked about individuals who don't eat meat ("Oh, I don't want to eat meat, so how godly am I?") and all the foolishness of men who want to atone for themselves. They're trying to accomplish something that only the Cross can accomplish—a righteousness that is unto eternity, that is worthy of God.

When Romans 3:23 says that "*all fall short of the glory of God,*" it means that you might be the most ascetic person, you may keep the entire Law, but regardless of how far you get, it there is still an infinite chasm between us and the holiness of God. So, to think that we might do something unto righteousness and to earn something by way of favor or religious energy is absolute foolishness. Paul says condemn that type of thinking. Speak against that.

Secondly, he says in verse 4 "*nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude.*" The key of enjoying what are the good gifts of God in this world is to do it with a thankful heart. And we said that there is a huge difference between individuals that are thankful and individuals that aren't. When it comes to our gracious and loving Father (He who is holy, He who is categorically different from us) don't take of His gifts freely without a thankful heart and spirit. We talk about someone who is an ingrate, there is no such worse an individual than one who is an ingrate to the living God.

On that basis, Paul says to "[point] out these things to the brethren." He says, "Make sure that the church understands that the forbidding of this, the forbidding of that—that legalistic, external religious attitude—these are not unto godliness at all. Be a minister of godliness. And if you warn the brethren, if you encourage them to do what is good, what is sanctified, what is excellent and given by our God for our good in His common grace," he says, "**you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus.**"

Part of being a guardian of the Word of God and the doctrine of truth means that we need to protect that which is the delight of the things of our God. God is a good God. To be a good servant of Jesus Christ we need to protect that from legalism. He goes on to kind of amplify that a little more. He says, "Timothy, you need to point these things out to the brethren," and do that by what means? By being "**constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.**" This is some great admonition.

What is the character of the good minister? Well, it tells us that it is someone who is "**constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine.**" Most of the translations choose to translate this particular term *entrephō* (ἐντρέφω) as "nourished." I'm not particularly sure where they get that from. I really didn't find that, but we'll just accept that. The idea of *entrephō* is to "nourish in: person or a thing." I think they just kept the metaphor that is often presented in Scripture of this idea of the milk of the Word and how it nourishes us; it builds us up. That's fine. That is good. I think that'll help us.

I think the English Standard Version does a better job of translating this verse because it leaves that whole eating element, the nourishing element of it. It says "*being trained in the words of faith.*" I think that's really the concept here. It's in the present tense so it gives us this idea of this continual nature; that it is our habitual practice that we are to be nourished in the words of faith.

This is of great conviction to me and to anyone who is to be a minister of God. We are to be in constant nourishment and training around the Word. If we are not drinking of the Word of God, you are giving less than what you are capable of doing, less than what the Spirit of God would delight for you to do by way of His Word. We need to be taking in the Word constantly. It says, "**nourished on the words.**" I want you to understand something. When it says "**the words,**" it's the plural form of the word *logos* (λόγος).

The next two things are the words “**of the faith**” and “**of the sound doctrine.**” They are two different aspects of the nourishing Word. If we are to dwell on the Word, we are to do it in these two particular areas: we are to do that by way of that which is “**of the faith**” and by that which is pertaining to “**sound doctrine.**” It’s a nuance that you might think is not a big deal. But it is. It has to do with the concept that it’s the words that are unto faith. It’s the Word of God that is able to transform, that is able to change, that is able to do something. When Hebrews 4:12 says that “*For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword...*” it is that precision instrument that is used by God through His Holy Spirit to change and transform us. To say that we are to be “**nourished on the words of faith**” or the Word of God pertaining to faith means that we are to be nourished in knowing that the Word changes lives.

The second part is something that is probably a bit more familiar to us and that is of “**sound doctrine**” by way of good teaching. In other words, the two elements that are emphasized in this process of nourishing (that is to teach the Word, to minister the Word of God, to meditate, nourish, and be trained in the Word of God) are in faith (in practice and efficacy) and in doctrine (in principle, in the understanding and the theology of it). There are so many of us, especially Christians in the United States that want to divide those things. We kind of think, “Well, as long as we are preaching the Gospel, isn’t that a good thing?” That is an excellent thing. Should we commend that? Of course. Should we ever denigrate that? Of course not.

On the flip side, however, there are many of us that would gravitate towards the doctrine aspect of it. They say, “Let me read the theologies. Let me see what everyone is saying. Let me see what scholars are thinking about what this particular passage says.” We are doctrinaires. We drink it in; we take theology and delight in it. Should we condemn that? Of course not. That is excellent and proper and a right perspective (in terms of wanting to understand more clearly and more precisely the things of the Word of God).

It’s a “both, and” not an “either, or” situation. The fact that we think that we ought to use the Word of God as a practical light shows displays immaturity. We ought to also bring along that which is doctrine and theology. The fact that we might think, “Oh, I love the theology, but how that works out, I’m not that sure.” That is also immaturity. Take the doctrine and combine it with the efficacy and we have what is to be the nourishment of the Word of God. It’s no coincidence that Paul is exhorting this young man Timothy, who is very capable in the faith; saying to be nourished and trained up in the Word of God as it relates to things that are *both* practical and theological; to be excellent in both. We ought to see the Word of God efficaciously (that is, in practice, it does something) and we ought to see it intellectually (how it ought to stimulate us, make us think, make us examine, make us more precise).

Well that’s what the minister ought to be in verse 6. He ought to be one that points out these things, being nourished in the words of the faith and of sound doctrine. And then he gives us, in particular, what the pursuit of godliness might be in verse 7.

### **The Priority of Godliness: The Pursuit of Godliness (v. 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...”**

Two commands or imperatives are given to us in verse 7 and they stand in direct contrast to one another. One is to reject “**worldly fables**” and silly myths. The second is to “**discipline yourself**” or to get yourself ready and train yourself for the purpose of godliness. This is what the pursuit of godliness entails in verse 7: the rejecting of one and the discipline of the other.

When it talks about these particular things, it says, “**But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women.**” I really think it’s probably a poor translation in our day and time and the reason why is that the phrase “fit only for old women” is one word in the Greek, *graōdēs* (γραώδης).

It’s an interesting word in the Greek, it is a word that from which we get our English term or English idiom “old wives tale.” You’ve heard of that right? It’s an “old wives tale” or it’s an “urban legend.” I’m sure you guys have heard various old wives tales. Things like if you eat chocolate you get acne. Is that true? In Wikipedia, it says that that’s an old wives tale. It’s not directly related. It may be the grease or something. I don’t know. That’s what I always assumed, but that’s not necessarily the case. And then there’s always the funny old wives tales.

There’s this funny Korean old wives tale that keeps going around which I don’t understand why it still persists. In fact, there are even members of our church that still believe it. This is the myth: If you turn on a fan in a closed room, you will die. You will die! Why? I’ve tired that before. I’ve tried it many times. I didn’t die. Those who hold to this myth may say, “Well, maybe there was enough air circulating.” I have no idea.

There are so many funny and interesting ones. When Kathy was in her last month of pregnancy, there were many people, strangers in fact, who came up to her and said, “Wow, you are carrying low. You must be having a boy.” Well, they’re right. And so people think it’s always true. If you carry low, it must be a boy. There are so many old wives tales and especially concerning the gender of a child. Dude, you have 50:50 odds. I mean, I could make up one and I’d be right, probably half the time. I can just say, “Well, let me ask you: What’s your favorite color? Hazel. Oh, then it’s a girl.” And I would be right half the time. And if I’m wrong, I can say, “Oh, it’s probably not your favorite color”.

Old wives tales are those funny things that we kind of throw out there and for whatever reason, have gotten a foothold and just kind of banter around; things that are not true. And the reason why this English idiom comes not just from the Scriptures but even way back in the Greek culture is because it had been used even by the philosophers as a sarcastic expression when they argued philosophical points. In our English, that idiom is not all that offensive. It's not meant to be. If I say, "Hey, this is an old wives tale," I don't expect the old wives in the congregation to stand up and say, "How dare you! I don't believe that. Well, I did, but I don't believe that anymore and don't insult my intelligence!" Nobody worries about that because they know it to be an idiom. Even by Paul's time, it was an idiom.

Some people think that Paul was being kind of a misogynist; that he was being a chauvinist. This is ridiculous. In fact, you just have to read on in [1 Timothy 5:1](#) where he says:

*"Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, **the older women as mothers**, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity."* (Emphasis mine)

Paul is all for graciousness. He's not just smacking down on old women. He's not about making fun of them and having a good time. "Yeah, that's a fable fit for old ladies." He's not doing that. And that's probably why that's not a good way to translate it today, not because it's a bad translation, but because we live in such a sensitive day and there are some that say Paul is chauvinistic because of phrases like that. Most of your modern translations (if you are not reading from the NASB) probably have something else like "silly myths" or "silly fables." That's fine. That conveys the idea entirely.

Paul says very clearly to Timothy "**have nothing to do**" or *paraiteomai* (παραιτέομαι). It means "you are to reject." It's a strong term. He is not saying you are to just kind of push it aside, you know, try not to laugh. He says you are to completely reject it. Push it away from you. He says to reject that which are "**worldly fables.**" The term for "**worldly**" here is the word *bebelōs* (βέβηλος) which we translate "profane." We know what "profanity" is—that's when you say bad things. But understand what "profane" means in the context of religion, of holiness.

Here's an illustration. In the Old Testament, there was this wash basin that was used in the temple service. Now, whoever crafted that wash basin made it without knowing that it would be used for the temple service. It's just a basin. It's just a bowl. If I took it home and used it in my house, we would call it a mundane or common bowl. It's normal. But, if the temple priests said, "We need a wash basin. Can we have that one?" They would pray over it and sanctify it; they would consecrate it for holy service. So what was once common or mundane becomes sanctified, holy, consecrated. Now, if I went back to the temple and wash my baby in it and wash my dishes in it, what happens to the wash basin that was once sanctified and holy unto the Lord? It becomes "profane." It is this concept of taking that which is to be used in proper worship and adoration of the holiness of God and to turn it, to change it back into something that is base, common and insignificant.

Paul is saying reject all these weird myths. The term is *muthos* (μῦθος) for "**fables.**" It's where we get our term "mythology" from. It's these fables, these falsehoods that they just imagined. When we step back for a moment and when we are in Heaven and we talk about what had come up in the sinfulness of human minds, we will notice in the Word of God that God makes fun of all falsehood. I know that God has a sense of humor. He clearly does. There are things that are in our Master's hands that clearly are for enjoyment. And I'm thankful for that. God has a sense of humor even when He talks about things that are false.

When you read through the prophets and in find that in Habakkuk, he says "Wait a minute. Who do you go to? You go to that piece of wood for advice? The thing you carved out with your hands? That is dumb." Literally, dumb right? It can't speak. He says, "You will bow down to a thing that is fashioned; a thing that is made." In Romans 1, what did people do? Instead of accepting the living God as their God, they go through any fancy. They make up stuff. They will worship things with four legs, created things, things that they make with their own hands, things made after their own image.

Human beings are ridiculous in the mythologies and the fables that they make up. We are to reject these fables. Why? Because they are profane, taking concepts of God and of Heaven and holy things and making them common and ridiculous and because they are silly. They're urban tales. They deserve no place on the mantle of truth. False notions of God detract from any ability for godliness.

Let me ask you a question: Is it possible for a person to be godly without truth? For a moment, you may have thought to yourself, "Well yeah, there are really religious people." Well, we didn't say religious, we said godly. That's the term that is used here, *eusebeia* (εὐσεβεία). And I told you that our term for "**godliness**" sometimes begins to lose that sensibility to us because we overuse it.

The Dhali Lama is very disciplined. He doesn't know the truth and he is not godly. Is he religious? Yeah. Is he a disciplined man? I heard so. Can he be called godly without truth? The answer is absolutely no. There is no godliness where there is no truth. How about these false teachers? They were advocating the forbidding of marriage. They were advocating the abstinence from certain foods. I guarantee you some of them were accusing Timothy of being too licentious. They were thinking that Timothy was the goddess. They thought that they themselves were godly, but without truth, godliness is not possible. False notions make godliness impossible.

The first command Paul made was to reject these false things. Secondly, He says to “**discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.**” Now, I know that we include ourselves in this discussion, but really, Paul is giving both of these imperatives in the second person singular. “You, Timothy, you need to reject these false mythologies. You, Timothy need to discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.” Obviously, by way of application that is to us, too. We also need to reject things that are false. And we need to discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness.

Isn't this kind of an odd thing? In the scope of this discussion, Paul has said that what is false about these teachers is that they are encouraging this external, formalized discipline of abstinence from marriage, from foods; they are legalists and they're disciplined in their legalism. You would think that Paul would say instead, “Now let grace abound. Don't let those guys put the shackles upon you. Go on and enjoy. Appreciate things.” And yet, here Paul is saying reject their falsehood and instead pursue discipline. You would almost think that he would avoid the term for discipline or for training completely. Why? Because it might smack of legalism again.

But you see, that's where we err. We seem to have a hard time getting our minds around the grace of God; that it does not preclude us to be disciplined for His glory. I mean to desire to discipline ourselves for His glory and godliness—that is an immensely excellent thing. But for whatever reason, we think that if we depend on the grace of God, we can't discipline ourselves. “Oh, that's legalism. That's legalism. Read my Bible? Don't tell me to read my Bible. Oh man, now I can't, because if I listen to you its legalism.” The foolishness of our immaturity and our inability get into these right notions. Is there grace? Absolutely. And yet, are we to discipline ourselves? There is no question we are to do so.

On the flip side of rejecting these falsehoods, he says “**discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.**” The term for discipline is *gumnasia* (γυμνασία). It's that word from which we get our English word “gymnasium” from. In fact, *gumnasia* means “naked.”

The reason why the root word for gymnasium comes from the word for naked is because in the Greek games that's how they competed. They did that because in their minds, they were unhindered. If they were going to run, they didn't want anything to hold them back. Most of the garb that day isn't that different from the garb of today. You watch all of our track athletes; they practically paint on their outfits. I mean it is so tight and snug and it's all for a good purpose and reason. You wouldn't run with a bathrobe on! So in that sense, they use to run, they use to compete, they use to do stuff, naked. So this athletic metaphor was that of training for the games. Paul likes this particular metaphor and he's saying that we ought to discipline ourselves. We ought to train ourselves for the purpose of godliness. We ought to fight. We ought to work hard.

I think of the track athlete. A lot of you guys know Allison Felix. Some of you guys have met Allison Felix. Her father, Paul Felix comes and preaches for us sometimes. Man, I just remember when she was just this little girl. Really smart. Really cute little girl. Now, she's this monster. She's a superhero. I was telling Paul Felix I was nervous watching her in the Olympics. If she doesn't win, it doesn't affect my household, but nevertheless your heart is like “Come on Allison!”

How does she get better and better in what she does? Years and years of training to shave off mere fractions of seconds, hundredths of seconds. That is insane to me. The discipline of what you eat, of what you do, how often you practice, how you stretch, of working out in certain ways, getting regiments, trying to get your reflexes to snap faster, to do all that stuff for what? For a mere second. People don't train for the Olympics in a few months.

I had a friend who decided to run in the LA marathon. And some of you guys in this room have run the LA marathon. And you guys trained for a number of months and properly so. But there are individuals, they would just sign up with a months notice and they go out and die. This particular individual stopped off not even a third, well maybe the halfway point and went into the local eating establishment, had a little Chinese food and took the day off, caught the bus and went home. It's hilarious. I mean the idea that you're going to just show up and run this marathon and your going to be fine? That's nuts.

In the same way, we say this godliness is not unintentional. You do not wake up one day and go, “Wow. I just love the Lord. And I, I know how to share the Gospel. I'm ready to discuss some of these very important theological things with my neighbor who has been asking me good questions. I didn't study. I just woke up and it's clear to me now.” Godliness is not unintentional. It comes by way of training. It comes by way of discipline.

I said that “**godliness**” because it loses it's meaning if you replace that and I don't encourage you to do it all the time, but if you replace that in some of your readings (at least in 1 Timothy) with Christ-likeness, I think it reveals an attitude of what godliness ought to be. For instance in 1 Timothy 2:1-2, we had already gone through that, it talks about offering prayer for all men. It says:

*“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.”*

Now, let me read that again by replacing the word godliness:

*“... for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all **Christ-likeness** and dignity.” (emphasis mine)*

Now, all of sudden it rings more true to what we are trying to discipline ourselves to do—to know the Lord more, to be like unto our Savior and to display His goodness and His grace and His glory in anything that we do in our lives. In 1 Timothy 2:9-10 it says:

*“Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness.”*

Or how about this:

*“... but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to **godliness**.”* (emphasis mine)

Then, all of a sudden we understand what Paul is getting at—Paul wants us to display the glory of our Savior. He would have us to display the magnificence of our God in His grace towards us. And then, we have that classic passage in 1 Timothy 3:16 which says:

*“And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.”*

Here, we can again replace godliness with Christ-likeness. What was that hymn that we said was sung early on in the church? *“He who was revealed in the flesh was, vindicated in the spirit, beheld by angels, proclaimed among nations, believed on in the world, taken up into glory.”* It's a song about Jesus Christ. Godliness is Christ-likeness and we need to desire, train, and discipline for that. It doesn't happen automatically. It doesn't happen unintentionally. Discipline engenders Christ-likeness.

You say, “Well, there is that danger that we could discipline ourselves in a very legalistic fashion.” That's true. There is no question about that. Galatians 5:1 tell us:

*“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”*

But we just don't leave it there. Why should we discipline ourselves? We discipline ourselves because we remember what Philippians 2:12-13 tells us to “*work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*” Sounds like discipline there. Why? Well verse 13 tells us “*for it is God who is at work in you.*” I get that. God is at work in me to do what? It says, “*both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*” In other words, both in your volition and desire as well as in you doing your work, God's the one causing both your desire and the net result of your work, and that unto His good pleasure.

Is God's desire and sanctification of you, His grace for you, such that He desires for you to do nothing outside of just enjoying the salvation that you have? No. Such attitudes of grace is self-centered, sinful, and is from the pit of hell. I mean, come on. God's Word makes it clear. We are to desire the things of the Lord. We are to discipline ourselves for the things of the Lord. We are to do good works because God has established and saved us for that purpose. We are to display the goodness of God and the glory of Him in this life. And it doesn't happen on accident. We are to discipline ourselves for that. Let's take a quick look at verse 8.

### **The Priority of Godliness: The Discipline of Godliness (v. 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*.”**

The question that verse 8 answers is, “Why do we discipline ourselves?” The answer is because there is great benefit in it. We'll talk next week about what that benefit is but what we need to understand now is that when Paul encourages Timothy to point out these things and to be a protector of the truth of the Gospel that it could transform the truth of sound and true theology, as well.

Then, we understand that we are to be nourished on the Word of God. We are to avoid all the fakeness, all the false stuff that is thrown out there—urban legends—that human beings invent. Instead, we are to engender ourselves to that which is the discipline for the purpose of godliness.

You know, it's amusing sometimes, but there are so many different cultic groups have the strangest and the weirdest, silly, old wives tale-ish, kind of things to them.

I don't know if you've ever taken a closer look at Mormonism, but the idea of God in Mormon theology is that God was once a man like you and I. He was an excellent man on His planet. I think that planet has a name, I don't really know. On the planet of Mormon, God was a man, but He obeyed and He became this incredibly holy man. He put on this external form of religion and He became great. So, He became a God and He got His own planet to govern. And then He comes over with His wife, and He has spiritual children—the firstborn which is Jesus Christ; the second born which is Lucifer;

Satan. And what happens is that Lucifer doesn't like God's plan for this Earth, so he rebels. And there is this whole thing and all of us are spiritual children and we can become gods like unto our god and have our own little planet and be gods someday, etc.

How do you do that? 1) You give a tenth of all that you own; 2) Then, you learn all these secret rituals, such as baptism for the dead and a few other weird things that people outside of Mormonism aren't really sure what they are; 3) And then there is also (and I think that this is the best one) there are four secret handshakes. Why did you need those? Well, according to Mormon theology there are four levels of Heaven. And when you go to the gates of the first one, you got to say "What's up Peter, bro?" And then, give him the handshake and I'm in. Then, when I go to the next gate, I got to go, "Hey, what's up bro? Yeah! (give handshake) Whoohoo! I'm in" And if you know all four secret handshakes, you get to go to Mormon Heaven!

We listen to that and we think that that is just crazy, just plain silly and that's what the Lord would say. We need to avoid silliness that detracts us from true godliness and Christ-likeness and instead be nourished on the Word. Take in what God has to say. Discipline yourself for the reading of the Scripture, to understanding what the Scripture has to say, and broaden your understanding of the Word of God and train yourself because it's intentional.

People become Christ-like, they become godly because they train themselves to it. And engender yourself with discipline for Christ-likeness. Let's close in prayer:

*Heavenly Father,*

*We thank You. We thank You for the ministry of Your Word. We thank You that even though You use fallen men to proclaim the Word of God, we know that the Word itself has the true treasure and power to be able to transform hearts.*

*We think about passages like Hebrew 4:12 that tell us Lord that You are the heart surgeon. And the scalpel that You wield for us is Your Word by way of Your Holy Spirit. And we ask that that would be true in us.*

*Help us to take the Word of God seriously. Help us to understand Lord that we are not going to grow in godliness and Christ-likeness just by osmosis. It won't be because we show up every Sunday to listen to one sermon.*

*Lord, help us to engender ourselves to the Word of God, to delight in it, to cherish it. Forgive us because Lord we lack in our disciplines frequently.*

*But Lord, help us to have a deeper and more abiding hunger for the Word of God. And may that be true for each one of us, so that it might be true for all of us. And that we might individual grow in Christ-likeness. And we might be able to encourage others to do the same as well.*

*We thank You for the Word of God and the blessing that it is and for Your view of sanctification and how You make us more like Your Son.*

*I pray these things in Jesus Name,  
Amen.*