

Shepherds & Servants 12

Train For Godliness

1 Timothy 4:6-11

Memory Verses: 1 Timothy 4:6

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

For three months now we have been in a series in 1 Timothy looking at what it means to be a church with Biblical leadership and Christ glorifying people unified through the principles of God's Word. We are to be led by qualified spiritual shepherds called Elders and qualified sacrificial servants called Deacons. And we are to be a people who protect the Gospel, hold to the faith, intercede in prayer, and obey the call without being distracted by legalism, liberalism, or any other false teaching. We partner with women in ministry, we partner with young people in ministry. We are the church of God, led by men of God, who follow the word of God, filled with the spirit of God, for the glory of God!

Which leads us to where we are today. Today we will be looking at what I consider to be the fundamental passage of this series and possibly the entire letter of 1 Timothy! Every verse in this passage is a banger and it is filled with vital truth and application. With that said, let's read **1 Timothy 4:6-11**.

The heading in my Bible concerning this passage says, "A good servant of Christ Jesus." It's important for us to recognize that it is not just for Elders and Deacons to serve the church. No, we are all called to serve the church. We are called to serve one another in the church, we are called to serve the lost outside the church, and most importantly we are called to serve Christ with our lives. But how are we to be good servants of the church and of Christ if we haven't been trained to be good servants? This of course is Paul's concern and it is what we will focus on today.

As good servants of Christ we must be trained for godliness. We must be trained in spiritual warfare and spiritual maturity in order to be successful in the mandate to reach the world with the Gospel and see lives completely transformed. In a world of darkness, lies, debauchery, disease, warfare, godlessness, paganism, and the spirit of the anti-christ, we must be trained in godliness if we are to overcome! Simply put, personal discipleship cannot be ignored if we are to be effective servants for the kingdom of God! **To serve the Church and Christ effectively, intentional discipleship training must be a priority!**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to see is that... **Leaders Must Train In**

Order To Train. Look again at the first part of **vs6a**. Paul is telling Timothy to lead by putting this before the brothers. Timothy is to lead by training the brothers, or the church, in godliness. This is what all good leaders do and in doing so he is as good servant of Christ. Again, leaders are servants.

But also notice the next part. Lead the brothers as a good servant, seems clearly geared towards Timothy the Elder at the church of Ephesus. But the next part is somewhat unclear as to who it is referring. I suggest that it is speaking of both Timothy and the church body! This would suggest that Timothy must be trained in order to train the people! Of course this is a simple and obvious point to make, but let us not forget its importance. If you want to be an effective leader, spiritual training and personal discipleship is just as important for you as it is for those you are training! **You can't lead what you haven't learned and you can't pour into others if your cup is empty!** This is why our Elders and Deacons will be responsible to be discipled. The same things we are asking of you we are asking of them. If they aren't prioritizing discipleship, how can we expect you to! Leadership flows from the top to the bottom! Leaders must train themselves in order to train others! **To serve the Church and Christ effectively, intentional discipleship training must be a priority**, first for our leaders and then for the rest of us.

Secondly we need to see that... **Spiritual Training Requires A Biblical Manual**. So how exactly are we to be trained? How are we to be discipled? There is only one starting point for us if we are to be intentional in our discipleship and that is the word of God. Look again at the second part of **verse 6b**. We must be trained with the words of the faith and good doctrine and those can only be found in the Bible. All discipleship must be based on and in the Bible. I have personally read discipleship materials, books, and been a part of discipleship classes and small groups where the Bible was not central to the material. Listen, no one can teach you how to be Christ-like other than Christ and his word. Anything else is opinion and less than. **I'm sure you know that every college football team has a play-book by which they call their plays in a game. Every player on the team is responsible to know the plays like the back of their hands. But did you know that that is not the only book they use. They have manuals upon manuals that describe how team meetings should be conducted, about how the men should be trained in the weight room, about how watching film will help discern a team's decisions, and even psych manuals to help the team get their heads in the right space! And it's not just college teams or pro teams, this is in the military, the police force, the fire department, and on and on. Every team has manuals they go back to for correct training!** The Bible is our training manual and it has everything in it that we need in order to train to be spiritual warriors for God. If we don't read the manual and if we aren't trained by the manual then we will not be effective in the war. In being

discipled by the Word, we protect ourselves from irreverent and silly myths. Look again at **vs7**. When you are **spiritually trained and intentionally discipled by the word of God** you will be able to **detect things that are out of place and don't make sense**. You will have a spiritual spidey sense that recognizes unbiblical teaching and attitudes. Again, think of the military. I bet you that somewhere there is a manual that teaches these guys how to detect booby traps and trip wires and IED's. Right? If they fail to identify these things they could be seriously injured. Same with us. If we fail to identify false teaching we will be spiritually injured. So again, we must be trained by the word! It is our training manual! **To serve the Church and Christ effectively, intentional discipleship training must be a priority.**

The next thing we need to see is that... **Spiritual Training Requires an Eternal Mindset**. Let's look again at **vs7-8**. In training for godliness we must recognize that we are not training physical muscles but spiritual ones. Yes, physical training does hold some value in this life. Better health, more energy and strength to do what God has called you to do. Taking care of your temple and all that. But the benefits of physical training end after this life. The Rock's muscles won't mean much in Heaven. Your six pack abs won't mean much in Heaven. Or your vegan diet, or your keto kale chips. You get the point. Where as physical training only has value here, spiritual training has value here and for all of eternity. Make sure you don't miss this. What you are learning now in the word, how you are being discipled now, will mean something for you for all of eternity. You don't lose it when you go to Heaven. First it has value for eternity because it teaches you of salvation in Christ. Second it has value for eternity because it shows you who Christ is and how to worship him forever. Don't just think of how your discipleship effects you and others now, think of how it effects you and other for all of time. **Are you training for just now or eternity?** That question might just change how seriously you take your discipleship! **To serve the Church and Christ effectively, intentional discipleship training must be a priority.**

Lastly, **Spiritual Training Requires A Worthy Mandate**. Look again at **verses 9-10**. When the bible dedicates a whole verse to setting up the importance of the next verse... you know that verse is important! Why is verse 10 so trustworthy and full of acceptance? Because it talks about the purpose of discipleship! We spiritually train because we are fighting to reach the life to come and we fight for a living savior. We fight for the one who died to give us ever lasting life. To this end we toil and strive. You may say that discipleship is hard and time consuming. You may say that discipleship, thought it builds us up as people, it doesn't provide us with a lot of physical rewards and pleasures. Whats the point

of all that work without a reward? But there is a reward. Yes, Heaven is a just reward. But the real reward is Christ himself. To get closer to Christ, to be more like him, to bring him glory... that is the real reward. We aren't striving merely for what Christ can give, but Christ himself. And he is worth it isn't he? **Jesus is worth the work!** He is worth the work of discipleship. **To serve the Church and Christ effectively, intentional discipleship training must be a priority.**

Application

Here at Stone Creek we care a great deal about discipleship. We believe that it is an absolute necessity for all believers and the main mandate of the leadership. And we believe that it doesn't just happen by chance, but only when done intentionally. I have a suspicion that most so called Christians, simply believe that all that is required of them is to say a prayer asking Jesus to forgive them of their sins and then to attend church of once in a while and thats all there is to it. **Let me ask you a question as it relates to growing as a person.** If you were born and then ate only once a week at best and every month at worst how well would you develop into a fully mature and healthy adult? You wouldn't would you? You would die a young malnourished runt. Or how well would a soldier develop into a SEAL if he only trained once a week at best and once a month at worst? They wouldn't. What's if LeBron only practiced at basketball a bit here and there or if Eddie Van Halen had only dabbled with instruments from time to time. You get the point! Training is important all of the time! **Discipleship must be intentional, deliberate, strategic and consistent.** This is why we have given you multiple avenues for discipleship at Stone Creek Church and why I must challenge you all to get engaged in these opportunities.

There are some that are prescribed and there are some that are elective. Prescribed is the term I prefer because we can't demand anything from you nor would we. Prescribed is as strong as it gets. But I will remind you, if you are a covenant partner you agreed to be discipled in the prescribed ways. The prescribed method of discipleship is simple. First, you are to join with the body of christ in discipleship through Sunday attendance and secondly through small group fellowship. If you aren't regular in attendance and you aren't regular in small group fellowship then you are out of covenant and you are missing out on discipleship training. Sunday attendance and Small groups are the bare minimum and should be non-negotiates for covenant partners.

But on top of that we also have elective, or voluntary forms of corporate discipleship. One of those is easy, it has elective in the title. Our spring and fall growth electives. These are great for another level of discipleship and growth, but they aren't substitutes for Sunday worship or small groups. Another is D-groups. Disciple Groups are a deeper level of small groups. If you aren't in a small group then why would you skip that

and go straight to a D-group? You are missing a step. But let's say you are doing all of these. That's awesome, unless of course you aren't also doing it on a personal level. Which means that you must have a personal discipleship strategy. Meaning you have a daily quiet time where you pray and read the word and get alone with God and your thoughts. All of these together will give you a training regiment that will shape you into the person that God wants you to be.

Conclusion

So what are you doing for discipleship? How are you being trained with the biblical manual, with an eternal mindset, for a worthy mandate? Today we want to help get you back into training! For each of you we have put together a **personal discipleship strategy guide** that if you take the time to go through you will have a great plan to grow in Christ. You say, i'm not going to do that. I get it. It does take time and work. Is Jesus worth the work? Is he? That's between you and Him. Those who think he's worth it will give it a shot. And as an extra measure of accountability, we are asking that if you are a covenant partner, that after you fill it out you share it with one of our deacons. We want our deacons to know how you want to train and how they can help. At the least how they can pray for you! **To serve the Church and Christ effectively, intentional discipleship training must be a priority.**