

No Pain, No Gain: Spiritual Exercise

Lesson for Sunday, February 22, 2026

TEXT: 1 Timothy 4:7–8

INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ What's one area of physical training (gym, diet, sport) you've stuck with, and what motivated the discipline? *Allow for the class to share...*
- ⇒ If you have ever had success in an exercise regimen, what were the elements that most contributed to your success? *Allow for the class to share...*
- ⇒ We have been learning what it means to be a disciple.
 - We have learned the four calls of Jesus that lead us from being lost to being a disciple (see who can remember them quickly).
 - We have also learned the obstacles that keep us from spiritual growth.
 - The last two weeks we have seen that God's will for our lives is to bear fruit (see who remembers the three types of spiritual fruit).
- ⇒ Now we are beginning to turn our attention to how we can become the people God desires for us to be.
- ⇒ Here is today's big idea: Godliness does not happen by **accident**; it requires intentional spiritual **discipline**.

BIBLE STUDY:

1. The Call to Spiritual Training (1 Timothy 4:7-8)
 - a. Notice the contrast in verse 7. What is the difference between “profane and old wives’ fables” and “exercising thyself unto godliness?”
 - i. The **put-off**: Paul is teaching that we should avoid all false teaching.
 1. “Profane” means worldly, the opposite of what is holy.
 2. “Fables” is the word we use for myths.
 3. “Old wives” was a common epithet denoting something fit only for the uneducated.
 - ii. The **put-on**: Exercise toward godliness.
 1. Godliness is a proper response and attitude toward God and the things of God.
 2. Godliness is the key word in 1 Timothy. It is a call to holy living.
 3. Exercise is an athletic term indicating the rigorous, self-sacrificing training an athlete undergoes as they prepare for competition.
 - b. Paul makes another observation in verse 8. He states that while physical exercise has some value for this life, godliness holds promise for this life and the life to come.
2. Understanding Godliness
 - a. Definition: Godliness is a life increasingly **transformed** to Christ's character and priorities.
 - i. Reference Romans 12:1-2
 - ii. 2 John 2:6 – Godliness is walking as Jesus walked.
 - iii. Discuss: How do we separate being godly from simply behaving in a godly manner (i.e. church activity, Bible knowledge, etc.)?
 - iv. The proper behaviors will produce a godly life and testimony, but it not just the behaviors that make one godly.
 - b. Discuss how godliness impacts the whole life. Personal godliness impacts relationships, work, private life, and mission/purpose. It is much more comprehensive than one's “personal relationship with Jesus.”
 - c. To tie it into our previous lesson, godliness is what produces spiritual fruit in the lives of disciples (conduct, character and converts).

3. The Means of Spiritual Exercise

- a. How do we exercise ourselves to godliness? We have already discussed that this is an intentional effort made by each individual.
- b. As we discussed in the previous points, our behaviors don't make us godly, but they lead us to godliness.
 - i. It is the same idea as exercise. Many people work out but remain in poor health (overweight, poor cardio, poor eating habits, etc.).
 - ii. But if someone becomes intentional (disciplined) with their exercise routine, they will begin moving toward good physical health over time.
- c. What are the spiritual disciplines we should build into our lives if we have a desire to become godly? *Allow for discussion...*
- d. Here are six basic disciplines that will lead us to godliness:
 - i. **Communicate** (Luke 11:1).
 1. We must learn to pray and communicate with God.
 2. "You can do more than pray after you have prayed; but you can never do more than pray until you have prayed."
 - ii. **Learn** (2 Timothy 2:15)
 1. We must learn God's Word.
 2. "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ."
 - iii. **Obey** (John 14:15)
 1. We will never grow past our level of obedience.
 2. "If Christ is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all."
 - iv. **Store** (Psalm 119:11)
 1. We must learn to store God's Word in our hearts.
 2. "I know of no other single practice in the Christian life more rewarding, practically speaking, than memorizing Scripture."
 - v. **Evangelize** (Mark 16:15)
 1. "Evangelism is not a professional job for a few trained men but is instead the unrelenting responsibility of every person who belongs to the company of Jesus."
 - vi. **Renew** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
 1. We must learn to daily feed ourselves on the Word of God.
 2. If you are going to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, you must have a daily quiet time with God.

APPLICATION/DISCUSSION:

- ⇒ If you look at the first letter of these six spiritual disciplines, you will see that they spell out CLOSER. As we become intentional in these areas, we will move CLOSER to Jesus.
- ⇒ Over the next six weeks, we will unpack each of these areas. For today, close your time by allowing them to evaluate their spiritual health. Ask the following questions and have them privately score themselves in each area.
- Is your prayer life spiritually fit? Write down a couple of words to describe it.
 - What is your Bible fitness level? What are you learning? What are you studying?
 - Are you fully obedient? What areas do you struggle with?
 - What Scripture verses are you working on memorizing right now?
 - How would you rate your personal witness?
 - How effective is your daily time with the Lord?