

# “BODILY EXERCISE PROFITS LITTLE”

I Timothy 4:6-11

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

## INTRODUCTION

Paul’s point is that life is about far more than physical issues; bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness profits for all things whether **in this life** or in **the life to come!**

## YOU NEED TO LIVE YOUR LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF ETERNITY!

Paul talks to Timothy about being a GOOD MINISTER OF CHRIST JESUS in v. 6.

All believers are to be “servants of God.”

- I. A GOOD MINISTER *LAYS A GOOD FOUNDATION* for others to walk on, and he *walks on that foundation too*.
  - “Put/lay down” is the literal meaning of the verb; stepping stones over treacherous ground.
  - “These things” are not only what was taught in vv. 1-5, but all the teachings of the book.
  - This must be done regularly—present tense.
  - The process occurs through the expounding of God’s Word
  - The members of the church are **brethren**—members of the family of God; treat them this way!
- II. A GOOD MINISTER MUST BE PREPARED (6): “Nourished on the words of the faith and of sound doctrine.”
  - A. He is **regularly being nourished** through the Word of God—present tense.
    1. He studies “the words of the faith—the content of Biblical Christianity
    2. He studies the words of “the sound doctrine.”
  - B. He has been following such solid Biblical teaching, and will continue to do so—perfect tense.
    - The best refutation of error is the positive presentation of the truth.
- III. A GOOD MINISTER MUST BE PIOUS. (7)

It is important for Timothy to be properly nourished with the appropriate victuals; “he must not feed on trash.”

  - A. He must flatly reject [“beg off”] “pious drivel”—“**profane and old wives tales.**” [Myths; cf. 1:4, 9]
  - B. He must regularly discipline himself for the purpose of **godliness**.
    - Greek word is *gymnos*—our gymnasium and gymnastics come from it.
    - Original meaning is “naked”. Discard any hindrance of burden so as to train more freely.
    - Exert oneself to the utmost, sparing no effort in order to attain the goal.
    - Keep one’s eye on the goal so as to win the victory.
    - Athletic victory is not the goal—godliness is!
- IV. A GOOD MINISTER MUST LIVE FOR WHAT IS OF ETERNAL VALUE. (8)
  - A. Bodily Discipline **is** of a little value—it has some benefits! [We must present them as living sacrifices!—Rom. 12:1-2.]
    - Keep in mind the background of ascetic denials of vv. 3-5.
    - “Discipline” is the noun *gymnasia* from the verb of v. 7. “Gymnastics” fits better with physical training than it does with “fasting” and other self-denials.
    - The body should be the servant of the man of God—not his master!
    - Paul puts down **physical exercise** as the primary pursuit, the inordinate pursuit, the perverted emphasis by adding some wrong religious ideas and values **such as yoga** etc.
  - B. Godliness **is profitable for all things**. [cf. “all things are yours”—now in this life and later (I Cor 3:21) since you are Christ’s]
    1. It has promise for the “Present life”—the now life.
    2. It has promise for *the life* to come—eternal life.

3. Spiritual disciplines are important in the Christian life: prayer, Bible reading, meditation on Scripture, service, submission, etc.

**THE BELIEVER HAS THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS!**

- C. This statement is Trustworthy and deserves full acceptance (cf. 1:15).

V. A GOOD MINISTER MUST LABOR HARD AND AGONIZE (10). [*“For this”*—the truth of v. 8]

- A. We must labor to the point of Exhaustion.

- This verb is appropriately used in connection with the athletic images given above.
- Although physical work is not excluded, Paul mainly focuses on spiritual endeavors.
- See Col. 1:29 for a parallel statement by Paul.

- B. We must strive [suffer reproach is not the best rendering here]—agonize is the Greek verb.

- Strain every nerve (Lk. 13:24)
- Put forth every effort, just like the greatest athlete in I Cor. 9:25—competes in the games, agonizes!
- We go through the race, struggle, and fight (Heb. 12:1).
- We endure the conflict (Phil. 1:30).

VI. A GOOD MINISTER MUST HAVE HIS HOPE FIXED UPON GOD—THE LIVING GOD (10b).

- A. This Hope is confident assurance—not wishful thinking.

- B. This hope is set in the past and continues in the present.

- C. This hope has its **object** as the LIVING GOD, not dead gods or changing circumstances.

- This is the God who can give us the best of this life. (v. 8)
- This is the God who can guarantee eternal life (v. 8)

VII. A GOOD MINISTER MUST HAVE HIS CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S SAVING WORK THROUGH CHRIST (10c).

- A. God is the Savior of all men

- The context does not allow us to “dumb down” the meaning of “Savior” to preserver, bringer of good to all men, even unbelievers, like the emperors who were “saviors” of their people.
- Paul shows in this passage consistent teaching on spiritual salvation.
- His own commentary of the meaning is found in 2:4, 6; don’t try to make it mean something else!
- Christ died for all; His salvation is sufficient for all; all who repent and believe in Him are saved!

- B. God is especially the Savior of believers—we are actually saved and **we can be guaranteed that our hope in Him is not in vain**—OUR SALVATION IS ACTUAL NOW AND LATER!

VIII. A GOOD MINISTER MUST PRESCRIBE AND TEACH THESE TRUTHS (11).

- A. Teach accurate Biblical truths.

- B. Command men and women to obey Scripture and to Avoid false teachers and teachings.

CONCLUSION

You must build upon a good foundation for your life; you must be prepared; you must be godly; you must live for what is of eternal value; you must labor hard and agonize; you must have your hope fixed on God; you must have your confidence in God’s saving work through Christ, you must teach and command these truths.

What are you living for? You are to be the Lord’s MINISTER.

**YOU NEED TO LIVE YOUR LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF ETERNITY!**