

# 10/29/23 - 1 Tim. 4:6-16 - "It's Time to Hit the Gym"

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[0:00] Please turn to 1 Timothy 4, 6 through 16. If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.

Have nothing to do with irrelevant, sorry, I didn't put my glasses on, silly myths. Rather, train yourself for godliness, for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. For to this end, we toil and strive because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy, when the council of elders laid their hands on you.

[1:20] Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

This is God's word. Thanks be to God. Boy, the pulpit was off center and everything.

You probably saw me scooting that over. That was my to-do list I forgot to do. And we had a international dance party here. It looked like something that John Travolta would have attended back in the, what was that, the 70s?

The tight jeans, hiked up jeans. Were these a thing back then too? These light? These? Do you think these work with the sermon?

I don't think so. Thanks for leaving this here. I think this was a plant. This is a trick. They knew I would take the bait. Not today, Satan.

[2:33] We're turning to something true. The word. Amen to that. It is always refreshing to be in the house of the Lord, to sing, to clap, to lift praises, to lift our amens, to just interact with the work that God's doing in the church.

And so, I want us to consider this passage today in its entirety. And I'm going to start hinting subtly around the main point and fully develop it, hopefully, by God's help of the Holy Spirit, through the Holy Spirit, by the end of our time.

But often, the thought of the word discipline can provoke many different reactions or images in our minds based upon our experiences or maybe our personal convictions in our lives.

When you think of the word discipline, you might think of something along the lines of control. When you think of discipline, you might think of strictness or routine or drills or maybe an indoctrination.

And far too often, discipline is intimidating without a direction, a scope in mind of where you're headed. As if discipline is forgotten and neglected to be a means to an end.

[4:04] And that end being fully in picture as you pursue discipline. So, Kent Hughes, much older and wiser pastor than I, he has a book that the men went through at 6 a.m.

through the disciplines of the godly man. And I wanted to take an excerpt out of this that stuck with me to help to illustrate what we're talking about with that.

Kent Hughes says in his book, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, he says, Discipline without direction is drudgery. Drudgery. That's a weird word.

But dull. Dull. It could be fatiguing. He illustrates this point. He says, Imagine a six-year-old, Kevin will be his name, whose parents have enrolled him in music lessons.

After school, every afternoon, prompted by his mother, he slouches into the living room and strums songs he must practice. And he doesn't like that while watching his buddies outside playing baseball in the park or across the street.

[ 5 : 22 ] That's discipline without direction. That's drudgery. That's dull. That's fatiguing. And he goes on to say, Now suppose Kevin is visited by an angel one afternoon during guitar practice.

In a vision, he's transported to Carnegie Hall. He's shown a guitar virtuoso giving a concert. Usually bored by classical music, Kevin is astonished by what he sees and hears.

The musician's fingers dance on the strings with fluidity and grace. Kevin thinks of how stupid and clunky his hands feel when they halt and falter over the chords.

The virtuoso blends clean, soaring notes into a musical aroma that wafts from his guitar. Kevin remembers the toneless and irritating discord that comes stumbling out of his.

But Kevin is enchanted. His head tilts to one side as he listens. He drinks in everything.

[ 6 : 36 ] He never imagined that anyone could play the guitar like this. The angel asks, What do you think, Kevin? The answer is a soft, slow, six-year-old, Wow.

The vision vanishes. And the angel is again standing in front of Kevin in his living room. Kevin, says the angel, The wonderful musician you saw is you in a few years.

Then pointing at the guitar, the angel declares, You must practice. And suddenly the angel disappears, and Kevin finds himself alone with his guitar.

What do you think, church? Do you think his attitude towards practice will be different now? As long as he remembers what he's going to become, Kevin's discipline will have a direction, a goal that will put him into the future.

Isn't that a wonderful story that Ken lays out? Over the last several weeks in our series in 1 Timothy, we have been hitting on the essentials of Christian doctrine within the household of God.

[ 7 : 59 ] We have defined the good fight in numerous occasions throughout this series. We've been able to identify orders of worship, what's priority and what's sort of secondary.

We've identified the order and qualifications with elders and deacons and other leaders within the church. We've organized, according to God's Word, gender roles between men and women being distinct.

And today is a transition in his letter to Timothy. It's going from belief to behavior, which is a propelling notion from his purpose statement in the book, as we saw last week.

He says in chapter 3, verse 14, And today, church, we will be exploring in order to discover the essential plan of God in our lives.

To place all Christians, every one of you, if you've got a ticker in your chest, if you're warm in a seat this morning, whether here or somewhere on the live stream, your path is laid out to you according to God's Word.

[ 9 : 30 ] It's a path of godliness that is for every single Christian. What this looks like, we'll discover that.

What this and how this will begin in our lives, and what that looks like specifically, we'll discover that today. And so the sermon titled today is, It's Time to Hit the Gym.

I needed to choose a title that you'll remember. And so there you go. And that's my shot. It's Time to Hit the Gym. Before we dive into this passage and the verses within, I'd like to pray.

So please join me in prayer. Father, thank you for your Word. Thank you for truth.

Help us, Lord, by the power of your Spirit to submit to your truth today. And we pray that in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

[ 10 : 32 ] Amen. It's time to hit the gym. The first point, the first of two points that I have today, is the Christian life is an endless training process.

And we're going to see that in verse 6 through 10. See, it says in verse 6, If you put these things before the brothers, this is a contextual reference to everything before and what's coming after.

If you put these things, what things? All those things. The stuff before this and after this. Put these things before the brothers. He continues to say, You will be a good servant of Christ Jesus.

Being trained in the words of the faith, being trained of the good doctrine that you have followed.

Now, Timothy was given quite a daunting task.

I don't think you guys would have been first in line for the task that Paul had for him in Ephesus. It was daunting. Being that he's in this younger class of men, of grown men, younger men, that word for younger men is nay.

[11:49] It went up to age 30. So he was in this lower classification, culturally speaking. And so there were a lot of old men. Those were the word for elder.

They were referred to as elders. Not the office of elder, but guarantees. The word elder, which are men over 40. So in this culture, there were two sort of realms of men.

And so Timothy was a young man going to do a task that's going to address all sorts of men. He's in his 30s, bearing the full weight of all pastoral duties commissioned by Paul.

And this is no ordinary church. This is a prominent church in Ephesus. It's an important church. In other words, this church needed Timothy, not Timmy.

Verse 16, Paul encourages him of how to be a good servant, a good steward of that church, and what to do. Timothy's purpose as any Christian is to be a good servant of Jesus Christ.

[13:04] But again, we might be like, well, he was a pastor. I don't know if this would apply to me. Well, I think it's the call of every Christian to be a good steward of Jesus Christ.

And so how? We have to ask ourselves how. What is the essential life for a Christian? What is essential in our lives? What is that going to look like?

Well, I think Paul was giving him two things to focus on in this passage that we're going to see. He says, number one, being trained in the words of the faith.

What's the faith? Faith. Coming by hearing and hearing the words of Christ. Being trained in the words of Christ. In other words, being trained in the gospel. And then the other side of that is being trained of the good doctrine that you have not learned but followed.

There's a following within the essential plan of a Christian. And so verse 7, we see the landscape in Ephesus was pretty tense.

[14:14] Ephesus was full of irreverence, silly myths that Paul says in verse 7. This takes us back to chapter 1 of him highlighting speculations of essential doctrines, especially regarding the law, and vain discussions, all these mystical little possibilities, talking about aliens all day.

Certainly upon seeing Timothy walk up in that church, they would have been as surprised as the church in Thessalonica that Paul sent Timothy to 13 years earlier. You're sending us this kid?

Right? Right? And Paul tells him that he is called to be a good servant of Jesus Christ there.

Meaning that it is his calling to be there.

Regardless of his confidence issues, regardless of him being a young man, God has called him and equipped him for that task.

And you see in verse 7, Paul tells Timothy to train for godliness. And this is essential to being a good steward of Jesus Christ, to train for godliness.

[15:33] In fact, verse 9 in this passage, you'll see verse 9, it says, it's a trustworthy saying, deserving of full acceptance. The greatest expression of godliness is found as we strive forward continuously in spiritual investments.

That's the expression at its greatest duncture of godliness. Continuously investing in our spiritual walk.

I love how Paul loves sports illustrations. And here he refers to the higher soul training for a Christian. That all Christians not should, not ought, but all Christians must strive forward towards something.

Soul training is an essential and eternal investment that encompasses a Christian's life. within the Christian culture today, it is hard not to see an epidemic of apathy and laziness in Western Christianity.

You can't not see it. It's really tough, the epidemic in this country.

[17:07] Christians are slow to commit to their own health. You know that the food we're eating isn't always food. Christians are slow to commit to their own health, let alone their spiritual health.

It's an epidemic. Church attendance becomes optional if it fits within your agenda. Discipleship is always a lower priority and gets cut out of your life if it means doing something else in your life that seems more important.

There's a fear of commitment to a body of Christians and the list can go on and on and on of how this apathy is formulated and laziness is seen in our culture.

We've lost the sense of training in our culture which means discipline. Training is a word that means discipline or discipline can even mean punishment that we're comfy we're spoiled laziness wins the day in our culture.

And you see if we took Paul's emphasis seriously we would see laziness as the epitome of a poor servant of Jesus Christ.

[ 18 : 25 ] And it is not justifiable. There's no way to reprioritize that and ask God's blessing in your life. There is no excuse. It's a toiling in our lives.

And it's not only for Timothy as a pastor but all who would look to Timothy as an example to follow. You see there's corporate nature attached to that as well.

And church we cannot forget what it means to be a good servant of Jesus Christ. We can't. The Christian life is to be spent training for godliness.

Training for godliness. And there is no excuse. That's a phrase from the men's ministry here. No excuses. Seriously. No excuse.

Verse 10 it's a toiling. It's a striving. This striving word actually is where we get our English word agonize. It's an agonizing pursuit sometimes.

[ 19 : 27 ] Because training is not easy in a physical sense. Ask Joe Scrim back there. It's not easy in a physical sense. And it doesn't get any easier in a spiritual sense either.

If anything it becomes harder. Because it's a battle of the mind and the heart. It's a battle that is emblematic of the battle Jesus Christ won on the cross.

the toiling the blood the sweat the tears leading up to the cross. And for us to forget that church have we lost our minds to think that we can run and rule our own lives and our agendas or ask God to bless our reorientation of plans and discipleship plans in our life.

It's not up to you to decide. It's up to God to dictate what is appropriate for your life and towards that we discipline ourselves because we're becoming somebody new.

We are becoming new creatures new creation new affections new attitudes new strivings.

[ 20 : 37 ] You see in verse 10 successful training requires a perspective shift. To train well we must therefore focus upon the hope in the living God verse 10 who is the savior of all therefore all we say every word that comes out of my mouth or your mouth to one another is centered upon the gospel and everything that we do is also gospel centered.

This is the focus upon the hope of the living God the risen Jesus Christ. This call directs all our energy toward that goal godliness is a sweaty affair.

It's a sweaty affair as Ken Hughes says and every aspect of training requires discipline. Every aspect of training requires discipline. Spiritual disciplines.

Ken Hughes goes on to say not suggesting a restricted or claustrophobic life. Spiritual disciplines frees us from the gravity of this present age and allows us to soar with the saints and the angels. Discipline helps us rise over apathy for a world that wants something to strive for, wants truth, and they look no further than our individual lives, and guess what happens when we come together?

[ 22 : 08 ] They boldly see truth. In this assembly. On this flip side though, to continuously neglect training is to fix your eyes upon the hope of the world, not the living hope.

Concerned only for the here and now. Concerned for worldliness, not godliness. And Paul says to Timothy, it's time to hit the gym.

How does he do that? Well, the second point is the church is God's training facility. The church is God's training facility.

Now, before we get too defensive upon the efforts that we may propose as training, we cannot forget the context of the training ground that Paul is reinforcing.

Now, you can say that, yeah, well, I train on my commute to work because that's all that I can do. Or, you say, well, I train in seminary and everything like that.

[ 23 : 11 ] Or, you might say, well, I train at home with my family. We read through the Bible, and yeah, I don't prioritize the gathering of the church, but I do it well at home. Or, we might turn to our podcast, or whatever preacher or teacher that doesn't know your name or doesn't know anything about your life that you turn to to be shepherded.

those are not contextual grounds of training. That's not what God intended for your life, to be trained.

Paul is reinforcing something important here, these contextual training grounds. Yes, your commute to work is important. Yes, your training in seminary is important.

Yes, your training and your discipleship of your family and relationships is important. Yes, all of that is important, but it falls short of the context here in the passage, the household of God.

This letter is centered upon the household of God, the church. He says, in verse 6, remember, if you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus.

[ 24 : 27 ] Number one, being trained in the words of the faith, holy sweat, and also of the good doctrine that what? You have followed.

This is the relational nature of training that is essential in all of our lives as a Christian. It's relational. Paul was an example to Timothy, just as Timothy was an example to others. Training is relational, and guess what? If you don't gather with the church in the household of God, you aren't training. It's not. It will fall short of God's desire to spur us on into godliness. And so, Paul begins to dive into that expression of good doctrine.

But he provides a list of five prepositions on how to behave among others, how to do this well, to put these among the brothers, what to do.

[ 25 : 32 ] This is the premise of where faith and works or speech and conduct worked hand in hand as one unit. He says in verse 11 and 12, command and teach these things.

What things? Chapter 1 to chapter 3, and guess what? Chapter 5 to chapter 6. All of it within the context. everything before and after. Command and teach these things.

Well, it goes back to how is Timothy going to be impressionable around all these older guys? He's in his 30s. How can young Timothy even get a lending ear to what he has to say, some young kid? How's he going to do that? Should he demand it? Because he's the pastor. Should he throw his weight around? Or maybe Paul intended for him to set a godly example for those.

This definitely hits home for me being a young preacher myself. But it also brings to mind the Puritan Herbert Palmer. He faced the same difficulty when he went to preach to a French-speaking congregation in Canterbury, England.

[ 26 : 52 ] Not only was Palmer short in stature, like a John Piper, you know, down here somewhere. Not only was he short in stature, he was fresh out of Cambridge University.

As he mounted in the pulpit, just stepping up to preach for the first time, an elderly French lady said in a loud voice, Alas, what shall this child say to us?

I can understand how Palmer felt being a young preacher. You see, it's not by demanding, throwing weight around, but setting a godly example that is for all pastors and all Christians.

Discipline is an example. the roadmap of discipline is seen and exemplified in speech, in conduct, in love, in verse 12, in faith, in purity.

This encompasses Timothy's words, behavior, his attitude, his belief, even his sexuality being pure. And if training is concerned, Timothy is to work supremely hard at these things.

[ 28 : 12 ] They're tenets of credibility, lest he be despised. And nobody listened to him. This is the absolute exemplary call of a pastor.

You see, a Christian's way of life directs the world and the household of God to the way of the cross. Each one of you are part of that plan, part of that expression.

One commentator says, the way to stop people from looking down on you is to make sure they look up to you. And the way to do that is to lead by example. It's a call for all Christians to follow and elders specifically to excel at, observably speaking.

In verse 15, what Timothy's example served to the church was quite an example of what the church should follow. And so for Timothy to immerse himself and practice those things in verse 16, to keep close watch on himself and persist in this for the sake of being a good servant of Jesus Christ, Timothy's behavior was to be followed.

And this is the arguing point. How are you to know the example to follow if you withdraw yourself from the relational community of God?

[ 29 : 37 ] That's the argument. every Christian was called to a task upon the holy service of God.

Every Christian. For Timothy, as we see in verse 13, it was to be devoted to the public reading of Scripture. That should be central in the gathering, to the exhortation or the word that we get preaching from and teaching.

Public reading. Exhortation. Teaching. The objective reality for a church's growth and godliness is completely related to how much you have this book opened or closed.

How much this is central or tertiary to the gathering of the church. For a pastor, this is a whole life commitment.

This is 24-7. It's no joke. At all. So, just as Paul encouraged Timothy to remember his calling, to practice, to keep watch, close watch, persist in his calling, so, too, we, as a body of believers, are to

remember our calling as well.

[ 30 : 57 ] Remember your calling. Timothy was a Christian with a high call to the office of elder. Though, too often, we allow that to excuse our behavior and the following emphasis of this passage within the context of the church, God's training facility.

There's such important words here. Faith, doctrine, teaching, all revolving around the Word of God. The Bible is God's training program.

It's this training manual. even since the days of Ezra, back in Nehemiah, back in Nehemiah 9, 1-8. This has been God's plan for His gathered church.

Bible exposition is essential to church health. And there is no comparable substitute for the gathered church of God than to open the Word and live the Word.

That goes to our purpose statement at Steel Valley Church. We're an intentional church family devoted to the hearing of God's Word and the doing of God's Word. That's our purpose.

[ 32 : 14 ] Because it's God's purpose for us. And you see, that which is central to the health of a church is central to the training of every Christian. This goes back to Adam and Eve in the garden who rejected God's Word.

And all the vibrant illustrative history of rejection after rejection after rejection. And the apathy that we see surrounding our culture today, guess what, is a continued suit of rejection.

John MacArthur says that the present benefit of spiritual discipline is a fulfilled, God-blessed, fruitful, and useful life.

If you get involved in spiritual gymnastics, the blessing of godliness will carry on into eternity. Just like Paul says, training has some worth in this life, but training yourself in godliness has eternal effects here and there.

Right? And John MacArthur continues to say, although many people spend far more time exercising their bodies than their souls, the excellent servant of Jesus Christ realizes that spiritual discipline is a priority.

[ 33 : 34 ] It's essential. Jesus Christ is the supreme example of spiritual discipline. Everything Christ did is an example that every Christian follows, which an elder pastor exemplifies in order to see an imitation of Christ likeness in his life.

And it's for all of us. This is a pastoral epistle, but it has very general application indeed, if theology is concerned. Now, thinking back to young six-year-old Kevin, remember him, don't forget Kevin in the living room with his guitar.

Thinking back to Kevin, as Hughes continues and concludes that story, says, as long as Kevin remembers what he's going to become, his discipline will have a direction, a goal that will pull him into the future.

Yes, effort will be involved, but you could hardly call it drudgery. That effort is not drudgery. It's a delight, not duty.

And when it comes to spiritual discipline in the Christian life, many believers feel as Kevin did towards guitar practice. It's discipline without direction. In church, the biggest struggle that we've faced in our individualized Western Christianity and belief of all time is succumbing to apathy.

[ 35 : 05 ] No training, no growth. There is no solo Christians within the household of God. This is a relational, communal endeavor.

And as I reflect upon this text, I believe the most valuable sentiment for us to wrestle with in this passage is that there are only one of two paths that apply that every Christian and even non-Christian are on.

It's a path of worldliness or godliness. there is no in-between church. You're either on a worldly path or a godly path.

Timothy was called to follow in behavior long before he himself was pastoring the church in Ephesus. In other words, he was a Christian before he was Pastor Timothy in Ephesus.

And so, it certainly applies broadly to all Christians, pastors and congregations alike. And so, we should feel the tension in our own hearts this morning when we are out of sync in the direction of godliness.

[ 36 : 23 ] We should feel that tension. Some of y'all might be mad at me. I can't be sorry for it. It's not my opinion. It's not my words. It's God's word for you.

I'm stewarding this on your behalf. For this, I labor, I toil. On your behalf. Christians never stop growing.

Christians grow. They don't plateau. The good news is, today, every one of us is one step away from beginning. Not a solo endeavor, just like you and your ear pods or air pods, whatever those things are called.

You and Planet Fitness, just you alone in your little zone watching whatever screen they have available. It's not a solo endeavor.

Training is essential to be carried out within the community of the gathering of God's people. So, what is holding you back in training, in hitting the gym?

[ 37 : 29 ] What's holding you back? Maybe it's motivation. your past record of trying and then failing and then trying and failing and trying and trying and trying and failing and failing and failing.

Maybe it's the possibility of failure, the fear of failure that holds you back. Maybe it's your work schedule. I might challenge a lot of you today to possibly pray for a new job that allows you to prioritize the gathering of God's people.

Maybe pray for your boss's heart to be softened towards you requesting the time off that you need to train well in your life. Maybe the boldness to even ask.

I know for a lot of us, the NFL is a huge distraction in our lives in our pursuit of godliness. Right? Turn your TV off. They're overpaid anyhow.

They're performing. Come on. But I will root for the Browns. Always. If I'm not in church.

[ 38 : 46 ] Every one of us is on a path, church. Worldliness or godliness, what's your path? What is your path? So as we come to wrap this up, we have to see past the pain, past the starting pains or the failing pains.

We have to set our eyes upon the goal and make one tangible step in the direction of process no matter where we are in our walk. You could be excelling in the Christian life and so mature that you've had some seasons of drought.

Or you could just be in this place of infancy in your faith and you're just like, I keep trying and failing. I'm going to urge you to try within the community of God with somebody two or three along with you in that process.

There is a book that I believe is helpful too along with the Bible but it helps every Christian who's desiring to grow. It's called Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life by Donald Whitney.

And here you'll find several disciplines that are derived from Scripture and apply it into our lives to help us to grow. The first being Bible intake. Not only just hearing the Bible or studying the Bible but reading, memorizing, praying the Bible, meditating, and studying.

[ 40 : 14 ] The second being prayer. The spiritual discipline of prayer. Meditate on Scripture in your prayers. Pray with others. Read about prayer.

Read other people's, other Christians' prayers to help enrich your life and your prayer life of the struggles that they transparently are going through.

Read other people's prayers. Nothing weird about it. Call your friend up and say, hey, can we pray for two minutes before I go into work? Pray. The third being worship.

Is worship publicly or privately? This book also covers the fourth spiritual discipline of evangelism. That kind of spurs you on to try one gospel conversation per week with a stranger, with a total stranger.

Or number six, stewardship. Stewardship of your time and your money because both are limited.

There's no hoarding in the gospel. We see in the seventh spiritual discipline, fasting.

[ 41 : 15 ] This strengthens prayer. Fasting has all, throughout all Christianity in all time, fasting has strengthened our prayer. It was actually expected of every Christian.

And when's the last time that we've ever fasted? Fasting was purposeful. It was certainly expected of the church. Even silence and solitude being the eighth spiritual discipline.

Sort of having those daily minute retreats where you just turn everything off. Even a household that's as crazy as ours with four kids trying to hurt each other constantly and we're breaking up fights, there is a way to find a one-minute retreat, even if it's going to the bathroom.

There's also a spiritual discipline of journaling. Having something tangible to help you understand, to evaluate, to process your thoughts. And then the last that the book covers is learning.

The spiritual discipline, learning, a discipline that admits you have a need to learn, that you don't got it all figured out, and you seek out growth. Church, there is only growth that we can look forward to in this life.

[ 42 : 34 ] As we look forward to the consummation, the glorification of the bride known as the church, this is how we do it. This is how we do it.

By faith in the Holy Spirit, these spiritual exercises produce spiritual fruit. And the only way we will endure in growth is by fixing our eyes upon not who we want to become, but rather we fix our eyes upon who God has called us all to become.

That changes our whole perception and our strivings because it's God's desire. Godliness is attainable for all, and it requires one step of faith.

Church, it is time to hit the gym. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.