

Laurentian Wesleyan Church
Sunday, May 22, 2016
Series: Lessons in 1st Timothy
Sermon: Training for Good

Illustration: A young man asked the philosophy Socrates the secret to success. Socrates told the young man to meet him near the river the next morning. They met. Socrates asked the young man to walk with him into the river. When the water got up to their neck, Socrates took the young man by surprise and dunked him into the water. The boy struggled to get out but Socrates was strong and kept him there until the boy started turning blue.

Finally, Socrates pulled his head out of the water and the first thing the young man did was to gasp and take a deep breath of air. Socrates asked: "What did you want the most when you were under the water?" The boy replied: "Air." Socrates said: "That is the secret to success. When you want success as badly as you wanted the air, then you will get it. There is no other secret."

What do you want? What are your desires?

What is the secret to success in the life of a Christian? That might sound like a strange question. I suppose that question could lead you down a path of pride and comparing yourself to others. That's certainly not an answer that honors God's Word. Let me ask it another way. We talk a lot about growth. That God wants you to grow. He wants His church to grow. He wants you to grow in your marriage relationship and your relationship with others. But if the Christian life is full of growth, what is the outcome of the growth?

"I'm taking this course to grow in my understanding to get that job."

"I'm dating this person so we can grow closer together because I would like to get married."

"I'm working hard because I'd like to grow my customer base and own my own business someday."

Growth leads somewhere. If you could somehow narrow down what you're after in life, where are you going? Yogi Berra said, "If you don't know where you're going, you will probably end up some place else."

I believe, ultimately, the result of growth in the life of a Christian is to be like Christ. 1 John 2:6 Says, "Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did."

We grow to become more like Jesus. In our actions, our thoughts, our motives.

You could call this being a disciple of Jesus. When you really encounter Him, you understand the forgiveness of sin and hope of Heaven is just the beginning. He wants to change your heart. Paul writes to Timothy, speaking about the value of pursuing godliness. What is success in the life of a Christian? It's to be like Christ.

That sounds like a lofty goal. Who could hope to be like Christ? I mean, Christ was perfect. Well, there's lots of grace and mercy along the way. God wants to help us live a holy, godly life. A life of purpose and freedom. What exciting thing does God want to do in your life? The bolder sentence on your handout should read like this...my error.

Let's dive into our passage today. We start at 1 Timothy 4:6.

"If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed" (NIV). That's the New International Version, I like how the New Living Translation puts it,

"If you explain these things to the brothers and sisters, Timothy, you will be a worthy servant of Christ Jesus, one **who is nourished by the message of faith** and the good teaching you have followed.

Brought up in, nourished.

Number one on your handout is:

1. Eat Right.

I've heard it said that if you want to be healthy, you must eat right. "Of course" you say. Well, you can't eat junk and think that exercise alone will balance everything out.

If the goal is to be like Christ, you need a steady diet of truth. For Timothy, there seems to be an attachment to his ministry and the nourishment. As you minister, Timothy, be nourished and taught well.

Are you eating right? I think a powerful prayer would be, "God, help me to fall in love with your Word."

I heard this song many years ago. It's called "Eat the Word" by the Worldwide Message Tribe. Some of it goes like this

I get it in the morning and I shove it down at noon.
I take a chunk at dinner with a big fat spoon.
I'm never really satisfied I know it sounds absurd
I'm starving, I'm afflicted, I'm addicted to the word

I'm gonna eat the word up.
I've got a hunger in my soul.
It's time to feed it.
Eat the Word up.

As we continue in our scripture, Paul goes on to warn Timothy not to have anything to do with myths and superstitions, but rather, "train yourself to be godly." This word train in the Greek is where we get our word "gymnasium". So if you want to be like Christ, go to the gym and start training.

2. Go to the Gym.

When you go into training, it usually means giving up something to do something with higher value. There's a cost to training.

Illustration: Our friend Julia woke up early on many weekends because she wanted to be a figure skater. Her goal required training.

Training means, well, exercising your faith. Putting it to use. You can't trust eat good food. Even good food can cause problems if you don't use it for its intended purpose...to give you fuel to live. I think that's such a simple metaphor but it works. Go into training. If you're training, you grow and get better. Work at it. As I've heard said, "nothing worth having doesn't take work". How will you "go to the gym" in the pursuit of being like Christ?

We come to, perhaps one of the most well known passages in 1st & 2nd Timothy, "For physical training has some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."

I think a thing not to miss here, is that Paul is acknowledging that there is value in training our physical bodies. It is the temple of the Holy Spirit. God lives in you. Having a healthy body is a good thing. But Paul reminds us that the value of physical training has limits. The pursuit of godliness is of even higher value.

3. Learn What Is Good and What Is Best.

I heard a reporter on CBC radio talk about a time in her life when she watched a lot of TV shows. One day, she realized that she was spending all her time watching people have friendships and she was missing out on having real friendships of her own. So she got up off the couch. There was nothing wrong with watching TV perhaps, but it wasn't the best use of her time.

The pursuit of godliness is best. It holds promise for both today and tomorrow. You can answer this question, do I spend my time doing good things, or the best things?

There's a phrase that I've been using in my weekly email to everyone, and it's "Walk It Out". I hope you're getting my weekly "Walk It Out" emails by the way. Just let me know if not. That phrase, to me, says, "Ok, you've heard the truth, you've gotten good teaching, now go walk the talk. Live it in your everyday life.

4. Walk It Out.

Verse 12 says, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers..."

It's better to show it in your life than declare your rights.

It's tempting to make assumptions about people based on their age. However, I've met senior adults who were very immature in their faith, and I've met teens who put my pursuit of godliness to shame. It's not about age. I think Paul does two things in this passage. He reminds adults who read this verse, who sometimes dismiss younger people because of their lack of experience, to treat them with respect as brothers and sisters in the Lord. He reminds young people to be humble...because I have learned, and if you're young here today you will learn this, that just because you're young doesn't mean you're always right. Be humble. Prove yourself by godly living, not by godly talk without the walk. Do you and I show our faith, or do we just talk about it?

Paul goes on to tell Timothy some areas he might like to focus on in his training. I think it would do us well to focus on them as well.

"...but set an example for the believers

I. In Speech

Proverbs 18:21, "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit."

"...but set an example for the believers

II. In Life

This is an interesting one to include in this list. Aren't all these things related to how Timothy was to live his life. Set an example by how you live your life. I wonder, though, if it is also a reminder for us to live like we're really living. A person full of life, vibrancy and enthusiasm. We've met people like that. We've also met people who really who we would not use the phrase "full of life" to describe them.

"...but set an example for the believers

III. In Love

Set an example in how you love people.

Illustration: If the only example of how to treat other people with love was your life, what conclusions would be drawn. Do we speak and act in love to one another?

"...but set an example for the believers

IV. In Faith

Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." Do we walk believing that God is real, and working, trusting Him for the future. Or does doubt and questioning fill our lives and our conversation. Now faith isn't suppressing our doubts. We need to talk about our doubts and seek answers. Faith isn't about being fake. Faith is about trusting God and finding Him to be faithful.

And finally, "...but set an example for the believers

V. In Purity

Zechariah 13:9 says, "This third I will put into the fire;
I will refine them like silver
and test them like gold.
They will call on my name
and I will answer them;
I will say, 'They are my people,'
and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'"

I'm so thankful up for God's forgiveness. Where would I be without it. He takes the guilt of my transgression and washes me white as snow. That's the Gospel. Sometimes, though, I think we forget that God also wants to give us the strength to say "no" to sin. To not only give us right standing with him through forgiveness, but help us be pure and holy through the power of His Holy Spirit working in us.

We close today with verses 9 & 10, "This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance (and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, and especially of those who believe."

Our hope is in Jesus. It is a free gift. We labor and strive, as Paul says, to make sure this hope is shown in our lives and how we live, not because our work will save us, but to point others to Jesus, the great heart changer.