

# Who Are You Becoming?

## STUDY 1 - TRAINING FOR GODLINESS

As disciples of Jesus, we need to progress from agreeing that Jesus is good, to investing in the spiritual formation process. Paul encourages Timothy on this very issue:

1 Timothy 4:8-9 (New Living Translation)

“Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.” This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it.

Here Paul compares physical training for an athlete with spiritual training for godliness, and he states that physical conditioning is of some importance but is less important than a godly life. The reason godliness is more important than physical fitness is due to its eternal value. Physical fitness is a good thing. At the very least, it means taking care of the body God gave us. But physical fitness only benefits us while we have this physical body. On the other hand, spiritual growth impacts eternity. This is an image Paul uses elsewhere (1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Galatians 2:2, Philippians 2:16). In Greek, training here has the sense of "gymnastic exercise", which could be physical training for sports games, or it could more broadly relate to bodily discipline.

## Explore & Share

Paul is indicating here that spiritual training has superior benefits to physical training. As we start off 2024 many of us are focused on intentional changes to improve our physical health. However, because we are training for godliness we must also, and more importantly, focus on intentional changes in our spiritual life.

### Discuss 1:

What might be some of the 2024 benefits and outcomes of training for godliness, for ourselves individually, and for our community? Write down some of those benefits below, and then share your reflections in your Connect.

Personal Benefits	Community Benefits

So, as disciples we are to 'train' for godliness rather than simplistically to 'try' for godliness. This creates the need for a disciplined life, patterned on the everyday habits of Jesus. Hence our training includes observing those daily habits of Jesus, and then understanding the use and purpose of spiritual disciplines, as we finally weave them into our life and, like Timothy, train for godliness. It is when we intentionally look to Jesus that we see how God has provided us with everything we need for this disciplined life.

2 Peter 1:3 (New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)

*His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and excellence.*



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### Discuss 2:

If godliness entails both a devotion to God, and a life that pleases God, then in what way can we, as disciples of Jesus, 'train for godliness'? Share some of your own personal tips on training for godliness with your Connect.

Do you ever read about Jesus in the Gospels and marvel at how He conducts himself? Do you say to yourself, 'oh that's Jesus, I could never do that'? Well, that's where disciplined training is needed. Christian author John Ortberg puts it this way:

*Disciplined people can do the right thing, at the right time, in the right way, for the right reason.*

Dallas Willard adds the following:

*Spiritual transformation into Christ-likeness is not going to happen unless we act... What transforms us is the will to obey Christ.*

*What then, are some of the spiritually disciplined actions that help us train for godliness? Fortunately, there is growing interest in, and awareness of, these spiritual disciplines.*

Richard Foster in his classic book *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* divides spiritual disciplines into the following three broad categories:

**Inward disciplines:** meditation, prayer, fasting, study

**Outward disciplines:** simplicity, solitude, submission, service

**Corporate disciplines:** confession, worship, guidance, celebration

### Discuss 3:

At the start of the year, as we consider the important question 'who are you becoming,' share with your Connect which of these disciplines you feel are strengths for you, and which need a more intentional focus? Close by praying for each other, and that 2024 is your most spiritually disciplined and fruitful year so far.

## Additional Resources

Richard Foster (2009). *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, Hodder Faith.

John Ortberg (1997). *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*, Harper Collins.

Dallas Willard (2002). *Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, Harper Collins.