

RUF Bible Study – 1 & 2 Timothy
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1 Tim. 4

1 Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons. 2 These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead.

3 They will say it is wrong to be married and wrong to eat certain foods. But God created those foods to be eaten with thanks by faithful people who know the truth. 4 Since everything God created is good, we should not reject any of it but receive it with thanks. 5 For we know it is made acceptable by the word of God and prayer.

6 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. 7 Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives' tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly. 8 "Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come." 9 This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it. 10 This is why we work hard and continue to struggle, for our hope is in the living God, who is the Savior of all people and particularly of all believers.

11 Teach these things and insist that everyone learn them. 12 Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. 13 Until I get there, focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them.

14 Do not neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophecy spoken over you when the elders of the church laid their hands on you. 15 Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you.

In looking at what makes a leader, it is helpful to ask ourselves, what kind of leaders do we like to follow? Would you like to follow a gossip? How about someone who cusses all the time? Would you follow someone who doesn't love what she does? Is it easy to follow someone who doesn't believe in what he's doing? What about a man who makes inappropriate sexual remarks all the time, or who comes on to you at work?

Paul tells Timothy what it takes to be a leader. He gives him leadership advice here, an older mentor to a young leader, a young pastor. And notice the advice doesn't take the tactic of 5 Things You Have to Do to Be a Success!!

What does Paul say?

Leaders Spot and Call Out Error

One of the thankless jobs of a leader is to police the truth. Leaders know what is right and what is wrong, and they must speak out against falsehood and speak up for the truth.

Unfortunately, there will be those who fall away. This is what the Bible and church word "apostasy" means. It means that people who called themselves Christians will deny the faith. Not that they will lose their salvation, for that is impossible. That they will stop calling themselves Christians.

Have you already met some of these people? It happens fairly often in college. Someone raised in church all her life will come to college, start drifting away in her actions and doing things against her conscience, and she'll start to believe wrong things and eventually she may throw away the faith. This is tragic. Christians persevere in the end.

They are led astray through demons and false teachers. There are two errors in thinking of demonic activity. One is to think too lightly of it. Most of us completely disregard it altogether. We laugh at Satan, or else he just never comes up in our thoughts at all. The Bible says he is real. He is powerful, dangerous and seeks our destruction.

The other error is to think too highly of him. You can get really, really into the devil (I did this after I read *The Satan Seller*), and start seeing Satan in every corner, underneath every bed and behind every snide remark. This too is dangerous. Satan is real, but he is also local. He cannot be everywhere at once. He is powerful, but he is controlled by God. He is God's Satan, as my friend Russ Ramsay likes to put it. Satan is on a leash, and one day soon that leash will be yanked so hard Satan will be destroyed. As another friend Dave Kyncl puts it: Love wins.

But of course Satan doesn't show up in all his satanic, red hot, Darth Maul fury. He uses people to do his dirty work. False teachers. Hypocrites. Insincere liars. These people have heard the lies, started believed them, lived them out and now are teaching others. Their consciences are seared. The NLT says their consciences are dead. This means that they knew the truth but slowly stopped listening to what they knew to be true.

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For this series, I used commentaries on 1 and 2 Timothy from Hughes, Stott, Knight, MacArthur, Ryken, and Clinton. The reader should assume that none of the ideas expressed are original to me.

The best way to think of the way this works is to think of your snooze button. We all should train ourselves to set our alarm clocks to go off when we want to get up. Then when the alarm goes off, you have to get up. If you do this, it will work.

But what do many of us do? We hit the snooze button. We sleep 15 more fitful minutes. Then we hit it again. If you do this, you are training yourself that the alarm doesn't matter. Your mind and body will stop taking it seriously and your alarm clock won't work anymore. Your conscience has been seared.

We do this when we don't listen to our consciences. When we stay at the party too long, shutting up the voice that says we should go. We hit the snooze on that voice. When we watch a movie that we know isn't good for us. That's hitting the snooze. When we go to that website, even though the voice says we shouldn't. That's not listening to the alarm. And eventually, if we persist, the alarm clock will permanently be on snooze and it won't ring anymore.

We've heard how Paul takes the conscience seriously. We should too. Listen to the alarm. Don't sear your conscience.

What is the particular error of the teachers? What is leading people astray? There are two common things: mysticism and legalism. Paul deals with both of those in different letters to the churches. But here he goes after asceticism.

Asceticism is one we don't think of much anymore, but it was a tour de force then, and really we can still see it today if we look.

Asceticism really comes from thinking the body and things of the earth are bad. Material things, things you can touch are evil. But the spiritual things are good. So we need to get rid of the physical and concentrate on the spiritual (this is a Gnostic way of thinking, if you're familiar with this word).

This came out in Paul's context with marriage and food. Some were teaching that it was wrong to get married, and most likely this was because of sex. And others were teaching that food, or certain foods, were to be avoided at all costs for your spirit to thrive.

People have thought this about sex for a long time. While most people have loved sex, some have gone the other way and taught it is evil, nasty, wrong and dirty. The church fell into this trap for centuries, and many of the church fathers taught that virginity was vastly superior to marriage. They tolerated some sex for procreation purposes only, so the church wouldn't die out. The Catholic church continued this teaching for even longer, adding holy days to the books, until there were over half the days in the year on which sex was forbidden (another reason for the Reformation?).

Food makes a little more sense. There were the Jewish purity laws, but these were abrogated in stark terms when Peter saw the vision of the food and heard the voice that all were for him to eat. This was connected with the understanding that the gospel was for the Gentiles now, the whole world. The food laws had to go.

Paul was most likely single. He surely fasted from food now and then. So what is he talking about?

The problem isn't really singleness or vegetarianism. The problem is when you take something that has helped you or is important to you and make it mandatory for others. *This* is the way of holiness. *This* is the way of righteousness.

It can be a new method. A new ministry. A way of childrearing that works for you. A strategy for living. A way to eat healthy. A book that simply has to be read if you want to understand things.

There isn't anything wrong with those things, nor with teaching others about what is working for you. But very often it moves into something different, like a spiritual litmus test.

And it keeps us away from the gospel. If you don't adopt this thing, or this way, then you aren't spiritual like me. It is a denial of God's good gifts and teaches others this self-denial is essential to a person's standing before God. It creates guilty consciences where there is no offense. There is a trick here – to deny your inner wickedness by cultivating outward observance to something non-essential to the gospel. It creates a compensatory righteousness. This is a way to become self-righteous. It happens by rejecting God's good gifts. "God is never properly worshiped by a denial of his gifts."²

But we should have a different outlook. We, as Christians, should understand creation is God. We should celebrate creation. All of it. Stars, flowers, vegetables, animals, sex, marriage, family, food, music, trees, mountains, oceans, men, women, children – all of it. As Christians, we should be the most thankful people in the world.

Those of us who believe and know the truth are grateful for God's creation. We believe and know Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Then, true gratitude is a response to saving grace.³

What God has made is good but we do corrupt it. Christians are to enjoy life to the fullest, but it is not 'anything goes!'. Although the right use of food and sex have God's blessing, lechery and gluttony fall under God's curse.⁴

What should we do then?

First, we should accept and enjoy God's gifts but do so in their proper place. But we should also pray and give thanks, making them holy by God's word and prayer. We should dedicate our meals to God. Something more than "Good God, good meat, good grub, let's eat" or something pithy like that. We need to express thankfulness for our daily bread. We should pray throughout the day whenever we see something that is an amazing part of God's creation. We should probably pray before

² Huges 99

³ Ryken, 164

⁴ Ryken 164

having sex with our spouse. That is a tremendous gift from God. For this, we might want to thank the Puritans. They had a healthy and vigorous view of sex, recapturing the beauty and importance of it as an expression of marital love.

We should pray before we study or go to class. I recently read *The Outrageous Idea of Academic Faithfulness*, a little book that helps the Christian student with how to work out a consistent worldview. It has a little prayer in it that goes:

“God, I trust that you have called me to this institution, this major, this class. Help me discern the lies, to retain valuable insights, and to contribute humbly as I may. I ask for your wisdom as I learn more about your world. Watch me as I study and engage this material. Through my work here, prepare me to serve in your kingdom.”⁵

There is true freedom in the gospel. We are free to live life.

Leaders Pursue Godliness

Paul wants Timothy to be a good leader, a good servant of Christ Jesus (v. 6). If we are Christians, we should all want that. Some of the sweetest words we could hear are from Jesus saying to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” This next paragraph in chapter 4 deals with godliness, which you see in verse 7. “Train yourself in godliness.”

Godliness is an action word. It isn’t passively sitting on the couch and soaking up the Bible or preaching or goodness. It involves reading the Bible, actively listening to preaching, going out and doing good works for people. There is a kinetic obedience, not a cloistered shut in. Godliness is reverent worship flowing into active obedience. It is going through the day thinking God’s thoughts after him and allowing those to dictate our life. It is the respect a believer owes to God and all of life is lived in the presence of God.

We pursue godliness in three ways. The first is through *good teaching*. Good teaching is the diet for godliness. This flows right out of the passage about bad teaching. Pursuing godliness means we reject bad doctrine. It means we can spot it and then reject it. We are “trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine.”

We pursue godliness as we learn about and then defend the faith. We must dine on good teaching. It must be our regular diet for our whole lives. The verbs here are in the present tense. It is an ongoing thing for us. Today we must train ourselves in the words of the faith and the good doctrine. Reading the Bible. Talking about it small group Bible studies. Hearing good teaching and preaching. Studying a book or two that isn’t fluff, but has meat on its bones.

Rev. Ryken tells a story of a mentor of his. This pastor was 80 years old and he and Ryken would meet to discuss people, problems and the Bible. This man would get excited, jump over to his library to start looking up passages and words to figure out their meanings. “We’re still learning, aren’t we!” he’d exclaim. Indeed he was. That is a beautiful picture of loving good teaching and pursuing godliness for a lifetime.

We also pursue godliness when we work on *godly training*. Paul writes, “Train yourself for godliness.” The word here for train yourself is exercise. It comes from the Greek word, *gymnos*, which we still have today in our word “gymnasium.” It’s the place for exercise (and yes, the Greeks would train naked).

God wants his people and leaders to be godly. “That’s why he Paul did not give Timothy seven steps to boost church attendance, or helpful tips about becoming a better administrator, or a thorough critique of his preaching style.” A good minister is a godly minister.

We are called to exercise. We should exercise our bodies. Some of you have become too familiar with the freshmen 15. You are worried about your pooches, pouches, muffin tops and love handles. How will you become fit and strong? Not by working out one time a month for 10 hours that day. It won’t work to think about how strong you were in high school. That doesn’t carry over. It isn’t helping if you only watch workout videos or read about exercise.

You have to go and do it. You have to do it regularly. You need to train yourself. This is true if we want to do anything well.

Think of how many hours it takes to train in order to run for 10 seconds in the Olympics. Think of how many hours it takes to learn and memorize and practice a language in order to speak it fluently. Think of the hours spent by the musical theater people in order to put on a performance where everyone knows what to do and works together. Think of how much time Sam Bradford is spending on game film, practice and workouts so he can lead the Sooners to victory.

The same is true for godliness. It doesn’t just happen. It won’t work if we spend our time on irreverent, silly myths like horoscopes or fluffy pop culture Christianity. We need a personal trainer, a mentor, a coach. The Holy Spirit and other people are that for us.

We need a training plan – we have one in the Bible. We need a workout schedule - we can have one by involving ourselves in church, Bible studies, small groups, fellowship, and working out good in our days.

There are things called the spiritual disciplines. They have gone underground but should be better promoted.

Read the Bible through in a year. Buy a One Year Bible and that will help you keep on track. Read some every day, have it in your mind. Memorize parts of the Bible.

Pray every day. Make a prayer list and pray through it. Add things that come to mind throughout the day. Go out regularly for some extended time of prayer.

Fast once in awhile. You might pick a meal during the week, and use that meal to remember that our bodies aren't the only thing that rule us, but we need to feed our spirit as well.

Get away for some solitude. Be quiet before God.

Go to church. Confess your sins. Hear God's forgiveness proclaimed. Partake of the meal of the Lord's Supper. Be blessed by the benediction.

Give your money away. Help the needy. Show mercy. Provide hospitality.

The benefits of these spiritual disciplines are eternal if we do them for God's glory and not our own. Physical exercise is good for a time, but goes away. Watching older football players is a sad thing. They used to be so strong and fast, but when they get to be in their 50s and 60s, many of them can barely walk. I used to weigh 160 pounds and played basketball every day. Now I'm pushing around a little more than that (okay, a lot more than that).

But godliness has value in every way, both in this life and the life to come. Godliness makes us better employees, employers, students, professors, spouses, boyfriends and girlfriends, friends, members of the church – every thing is helped in the world by godly people. Not arrogant, prideful, do-gooders, high and mighty, haughty. But humble and godly.

Paul says that not only will that help our world but that there is a connection between sanctification and glorification. The godliness begun in this life will be perfected in the next. Sanctification is the root of glorification; glorification is the fruit of sanctification.

The last thing Paul mentions here about godliness is the *global task*. As we look at our lives and think about our own godliness, we have to remember to look up and look out. We don't only look in. It's like you're running around the track. Around and around. That is good. You're training yourself. Maybe, to keep the analogy in tact, you are listening to a great podcast on your iPod. So you're getting good teaching.

What the global task means is you look up and out and notice there are others around you. They need what you have. They need to hear about Jesus and the church. Your working out isn't only for you. It is also for others. Godliness isn't a selfish, self-focused thing. It goes out.

Paul says this is tough. We toil and strive. It's hard work to be godly and to tell others about Jesus. But it's worth the effort. We have the hope of the living God. We know Jesus saves. We share that message with everyone. We want all to hear the message of the good news of Jesus Christ saving sinners.

We came across Paul's way of putting this earlier in chapter 2. Paul isn't saying that all people are Christians. He's not a universalist. He means that all sorts of people, all kinds of people, will be saved. He's saying, Jesus is the savior of those who believe. The word "especially" there means "in other words."

If you do not believe in Jesus, you are not saved. Jesus is the only Savior for those who truly believe. That is our message. It is true for us and it is true for you and for the whole world?

What do you think? How are you doing on godliness? Leaders are godly people, or they need to be. Are you training in godliness? Are you holding fast and training in the truth, with a good diet of good teaching? Do you even care about these things? I would guess not many of us are reading the Bible every day, but do you even care about it? Do you think about godliness and truth? Doctrine and training? What would caring about these things look like for you?

Do you believe that Jesus is the savior of the world? What might that spur you to think and do?

Leaders Lead

Paul then moves to instructing Timothy as a pastor and leader. He wants him to truly minister, to lead God's people. He gives Timothy an authority to command and teach these things.

Paul starts then with Timothy's *age*. He was a young man (in his mid thirties, but in that culture that was still considered young for someone to have authority). This means you can lead. Not necessarily be a pastor at 20 years old (I don't think that is appropriate), but you can lead. Leadership isn't about position. It is about authority. If you are young, you need to demonstrate godly character, wise choices, and leading by example. College is a great time to start leading.

You lead then out of your *character*. Paul puts it this way: "set the believers an example in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."

Speech – our words should be seasoned with grace. Christian leaders naturally and confidently talk about spiritual things. They tell the truth. They aren't argumentative. They don't use humor to tear others down. When they do need to say a word of rebuke, those words are covered with affection and people still feel loved. They don't gossip. They encourage. We use speech all the time, and it says so much about us. Listen to yourself. What do your words say about you? Jesus said, "For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks." (Matt. 12:34). Listen to your words. What is in your heart?

In conduct – our lives show whether or not we believe the gospel. There is a connection with our words, our heart and our lives. What are our lives saying about Jesus in everyday life? Leaders have integrity. They are the same whether or not when they are "on" or when they are at home. They aren't fake. What does your life say about the gospel?

Love – leaders love well. What do you love? How do you love? Keep the commandments, love God and love others. Have a passionate concern for the lost, heart for people under his care, sharing their joy and sorrows, care for those who are difficult.

Faith – leaders believe things. What do you believe? What are you living for? Christian leaders have a complete trust in God, believes God can save sinners, seeks divine wisdom, lives by faith, is bold in his faith

Purity – leaders seek to live pure lives. This word deals with sexual matters. And we live in a day and age with sexual impurity. How is your life going in regards to purity? What are you watching? What are you hearing? What are you touching and tasting? What goes on inside your brain? Take steps to change. Get others to help you talk about your struggles. Be honest and seek help. Buy and install a porn blocker on your computer. Don't date someone who doesn't have one installed. Think about your sexual history and deal with those issues.

Paul then moves to Timothy's *giftedness and ordination*. For Timothy that was preaching and teaching. He was to devote himself to those things and not neglect them. You should not obsess about it, but you should spend some time thinking about what your gifts are and then pursue those things. The church and the world needs those talents and assets to be unleashed in the world.

Paul encouraged and exhorted Timothy to devote himself to "the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching." In the synagogues, men would read portions of the Scripture out loud and then someone would explain what it means. After Jesus came, the Christians continued to do this, but they would add what we now call a New Testament reading. This means that what was happening, and I would say what we should do, is to hear the Scriptures read and then someone preach and teach on that text. This is called expositional teaching. Too many churches are forgoing the reading of the Bible. Reading one or two verses isn't reading the Bible. Too many churches are doing disexpositional sermons. They are jumping off from a text and then teaching whatever comes to mind or whatever series they are in. There are too many how to sermons, too many stories, jokes, therapeutic and political messages. We need to hear the Bible read and taught. Don't settle for anything less.

Paul encouraged Timothy in this by mentioning his ordination. He had an inward call to the ministry (the word of prophecy) and then an outward sign of ordination when the elders laid their hands on him. This is the pattern for ordaining our church leaders. You don't get to be a pastor just because you want to. There needs to be a body of elders to test you, observe you and, if you pass, ordain you. We should be able to trust this ordination to be substantial. We don't need a multiplication of untrained and untested pastors who specialize in some small detail. There are a ton of good people - they don't need to be pastors but can use their gifts in the church. There is a church in town that has a Pastor of First Impressions. That's just ridiculous. But I'll move on. Leaders don't give themselves position. They do initiate, but they allow others to have insight and say into their lives, and they listen. When they are ordained, that really matters in their lives and they can look back on that for assurance when things are rough. All of us should use our gifts and lead out in those areas.

Two more things for leaders. Leaders must be *diligent*. Paul urges Timothy to practice these things, to devote himself to them. This means he should give it his all. 24-7. It's not enough to go in spurts. Leaders should see progress by working hard on godliness and their gifts. There are no days off for godliness. We must be diligent in the hard work of leading.

That last thing is leaders show *balance*. Paul says – watch your life and watch your doctrine. Keep a close watch on them. Persist in it.

It's easy to let things go. That's how you get the freshmen fifteen. You don't get 15 pounds in one day. If so, you'd freak out and do something about it. But it comes a little at a time. You gain a half pound a month, so that's 6 pounds a year, which is 60 pounds in ten years, which isn't that far away. 120 pounds in 20 years – all from a half pound a month. You have to watch yourself. Check up on how you're doing.

How is your life? Where are you spending your time and your money? Who are your friends and are they really good for you? What do you think about when you're alone? Are you really happy? Where is your life heading? What would it mean to change some things?

We also watch our doctrine. We've talked about this already through 1 Timothy. Paul cares about doctrine. If you don't care about doctrine, then you aren't following the Bible. It cares.

Doctrine and life go together. What you think impacts how you live. What you believe comes out in the way you act.

I want you to believe and live out of the gospel. If you understand, truly and deeply believe, that you are worse than you think, that your heart is darker than you thought, that your life is more messed up than you know, and if you believe that God loves you more than you ever hoped, dreamed or imagined, because Jesus Christ came, lived the perfect life for you, died on the cross as a payment for your messed up, sinful, broken life, and was raised from the dead thereby proving all he said and did and the Bible to be true. If you really believe that – it matters. It means you can be free to live without worry that what others think of you defines you. That God loved you before the very foundation of the world and chose you to be his child so you don't have to give every ounce of energy to some other god like approval or grades or success. You can be free to enjoy those things instead of serve them. You can be free of your anger because God takes care of injustice.

This is the doctrine and life I'm talking about.

There are a ton of things to do in this passage. You may be feeling overwhelmed by all of it. The words of the faith. The good doctrine. Living with clear consciences and grateful hearts. Following a living God who sent his son Jesus to be the Savior of the World. Devoted to a life of godliness with a balance of life and doctrine.

What you have to remember is, and this is the gospel for you today, godliness and all of these things, come from Jesus. He lived in godliness. He gives us godliness. Godliness isn't external but is an inner power to live a godly life, and the mystery of Christ makes this possible.⁶

All of these things are good things that we should do. We should talk about how our lives can be more righteous, more godly. Each of us and as a group, as a church.

But what we're talking about in that topic is following Jesus. He is mystery of godliness. If we pursue all of these things without a love and devotion to him, we will not gain what it is we seek. He is the Savior of everyone who believes, and following him transforms our lives.

May we believe and may we be transformed.

⁶ Hughes, 106