

# 1 Timothy 4:6-8

## A Simple Solution to a Significant Problem

Every day, we encounter new stories and social media posts that offer simple solutions to significant problems. Cutting out sugar can decrease health problems. Avoiding caffeine can improve sleep. Exercise strengthens our hearts. Washing our hands prevents the spread of germs. For the most part, though imperfectly, we try to adopt these simple steps to improve our lives.

Yet perhaps the simplest and most beneficial exercises we can adopt are not physical (as important as they are), but spiritual. The spiritual disciplines are vital to both our body and our soul, yet few practice them. Consider, for example, the basic discipline of reading the Bible. According to a 2017 LifeWay study, Americans love the Bible but do not read it. It is held in high regard, but rarely opened. Less than a quarter of those who have read a Bible have a systematic plan for reading it daily. Only a third of Americans ever pick it up on their own. This has produced generations of biblical illiteracy. We rob ourselves of the secret to spiritual health.

So, it is with all the disciplines. When was the last time we practiced biblical meditation, fasting, or developed a robust prayer life? Have we considered the true purpose and meaning of worship beyond Sunday morning services?

In 1 Timothy 4:6-8, Paul exhorts his young protégé to cultivate an environment of godliness and sound doctrine. To achieve holiness, one needs discipline. Paul uses the term *train* to make his point. “Rather train yourself for godliness,” he writes, “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” (vs. 7b-8). Notice how a disciplined faith is beneficial for both body and soul; both the present and the future.

How, then, do the spiritual disciplines benefit us in the present? First, **they draw us closer to God.** The spiritual disciplines draw us closer to our Maker in such a way that life is less mysterious and more glorious. We can either be in communion with God or feel alone in a vast cosmos that does not care we exist. The spiritual disciplines are the primary means by which we grow closer to our God, and we grow deeper in the gospel.

Secondly, **they help us grow in the Fruit of the Spirit.** Paul lists the Fruit of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). These are the fruit of Christian godliness. A true Christian bears the fruit of love, joy, and peace. Like fruit on a tree, they are not produced by chance. They must be cultivated, and the spiritual

disciplines are the key to this work. Unless you are intentional in your spiritual growth, you will never grow spiritually.

Thirdly, **they prepare us for death and the life after.** The Bible utilizes the metaphor of a wedding to describe the end times. Weddings require patience, preparation, and anticipation. At every wedding, the bride and her party arrive early to get ready. It is one of the reasons why the tradition of the groom not seeing the bride is so beloved. As we wait for eternal life, we must prepare ourselves like a bride prepares for her wedding. The primary means of doing that are the spiritual disciplines. As Paul writes, “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

During this quiet period of an offseason, fans want to know if the players are spending their time in the weight room getting strong, in the film room learning more about the game, or at the field working on their fundamentals. If we expect that sort of dedication from college students, why do we not expect the same dedication for something far more important?