

Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church
We're glad you're here!



An open book is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with small, dense text, likely a Bible. The background is a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. The text is overlaid in a large, bold, black font.

How to be a Man of God

Scripture text: 1 Timothy 4

A Godly Minister, Practicing the Word (1 Tim. 4:7–12)

Paul shifted to an athletic illustration at this point in his letter. Just as a Greek or Roman athlete had to refuse certain things, eat the right food, and do the right exercises, **so a Christian should practice “spiritual exercise.”** If a Christian puts as much energy and discipline into his spiritual life as an athlete does into his game, **the Christian grows faster and accomplishes much more for God.** Paul discussed in this section three levels of life.

The bad—“profane and old wives’ fables” (v. 7a).

These are, of course, the false teachings and traditions of the apostates. **These doctrines have no basis in Scripture; in fact, they contradict the Word of God.** They are the kind of teachings that silly people would discuss, not dedicated men and women of the Word! No doubt these teachings involved the false doctrines just named (1 Tim. 4:2–3). Paul also warned Titus about “**Jewish fables**” (Titus 1:14). Paul warned Timothy about these same “fables” in his second letter (2 Tim. 4:4).

A believer cannot rediscover new doctrines.

Paul admonished Timothy **to remain true to “the good doctrine which you have closely followed up to now”** (1 Tim. 4:6b, literal translation).

He warned him not to **“give heed to fables and endless genealogies”** (1 Tim. 1:4).

While a pastor must know what the enemy is teaching, **he must not be influenced by it.** A chemist may handle and study poisons, but he does not permit them to get into his system.

The temporary—“bodily exercise” (vv. 7–8).

Again, **this is an athletic image**. Certainly we ought to care for our bodies, and exercise is a part of that care. Our bodies are God’s temples, to be used for His glory (1 Cor. 6:19–20), and His tools for His service (Rom. 12:1–2).

But bodily exercise benefits us only during this life; godly exercise is profitable now and for eternity. Paul did not ask Timothy to choose between the two; I think **God expects us to practice both**. A healthy body can be used of God, **but we must major on holiness**.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know **that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit** within you, whom you have from God? **You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.** So glorify God in your body.

Romans 12:1-2 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, **to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,** which is your spiritual worship. **Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,** that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

The eternal—“godliness” (vv. 7–12).

Phillips Brooks said, “The great purpose of life—the shaping of character by truth.” Godly character and conduct are far more important than golf trophies or home-run records, though it is possible for a person to have both. Paul challenged Timothy to be as devoted to godliness as an athlete is to his sport. We are living and laboring for eternity.

Paul used two similar athletic images in writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9:24–27), emphasizing the **disciplines necessary for godly living.**

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, **but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.** Every athlete **exercises self-control in all things.** They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. **So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control,** lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

As an athlete must control his body and obey the rules, **so a Christian must make his body his servant and not his master.**

When I see high school football squads and baseball teams going through their calisthenics under the hot summer sun, I am reminded that there are spiritual exercises *that I ought to be doing* (Heb. 5:14). **Prayer, meditation, self-examination, fellowship, service, sacrifice, submission to the will of others, witness—**all of these can assist me, **through the Spirit, to become a more godly person.**

Hebrews 5:8-14 Although he was a son, **he learned obedience through what he suffered.** And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God **a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.** About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become **dull of hearing.** For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, **for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled** in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But **solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.**

Spiritual exercise is not easy; we must “labor and suffer reproach” (1 Tim. 4:10a). “For this we labor and strive” (niv). The word translated “strive” is an athletic word from which we get our English word **agonize**. It is the **picture of an athlete straining and giving his best to win**. A Christian who wants to excel must really work at it, by the grace of God and to the glory of God.

But exercising ourselves in **godly living is not only profitable for us; it is also profitable for others** (1 Tim. 4:11–12). It enables us to be good examples, so that we encourage others. Paul named several areas of life in which you and I should be examples.

“In word” (1 Tim. 4:12) implies that our speech should always be honest and loving, “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15).

Ephesians 4:14-16 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. **Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ**, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

“In conduct” (the kjv’s “conversation” means **“walk,”** not “talk”) **suggests that our lives are to be controlled by the Word of God.** We must not be like the hypocrites Paul described to Titus (Titus 1:16): **“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him.”**

Titus 1:6 if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and **not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.** For an overseer, as God's steward, **must be above reproach.** He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.

“In love” (charity) points to the motivation of our lives. We do not obey God to be applauded by men (Matt. 6:1ff), but because we love God and love God’s people.

Matthew 6:1-4 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, **I say to you, they have received their reward.** But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

(“In spirit” is not in many manuscripts, but it would describe the **inner enthusiasm** and excitement of a child of God.)

“**In faith**” implies that **we trust God and are faithful to Him**. Faith and love often go together (1 Tim. 1:14; 2:15; 6:11; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:22). Faith always leads to faithfulness.

“**In purity**” is important **as we live in this present evil world**. Ephesus was a center **for sexual impurity**, and the young man Timothy was **faced with temptations**. He must have a chaste relationship to the women in the church (1 Tim. 5:2) and **keep himself pure in mind, heart, and body**.

But godly living not only helps us and other believers; **it also has its influence on the lost.** Paul reminded pastor Timothy that Jesus Christ is the Savior (1 Tim. 4:10), and **it is the believer's task to share that Good News with the lost.** In effect he wrote, **“We Christians have fixed our hope in the living God, but the lost have no hope and do not know the living God. All that many of them know are the dead idols that can never save them.”**

The title “Savior of all men” does not imply that everybody will be saved (universalism), or that God saves people in spite of themselves; for Paul added **“specially of those that believe.”**

It is faith that saves one's soul (Eph. 2:8–10). Since God “will have all men to be saved” (1 Tim. 2:4), and since Christ “gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:6), then any lost sinner can trust Christ and be saved. Christ is “the Savior of all men,” so nobody need despair.

Timothy should not fear to practice the Word of God and apply it to the life of the church, for this Word is “a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance” (1 Tim. 4:9). These faithful sayings made up a summary of truth for the early church (see 1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8).

The fact that Timothy was a young man (**the word then applied to a person from youth to forty**) should not deter him **from practicing the Word**.

In fact, he was to “**command**” these things, and this is our military word “**charge**” (1 Tim. 1:3).

The local church is a unit in God’s spiritual army, and its leaders are to pass God’s orders along to the people with authority and conviction.

A Growing Minister, Progressing in the Word (1 Tim. 4:13–16)

The key thought in this section is “**that thy profiting may appear to all**” (1 Tim. 4:15). The word profiting (“progress,” niv) is a Greek military term; it means “pioneer advance.” It describes the soldiers who go ahead of the troops, **clear away the obstacles, and make it possible for others to follow.** As a godly pastor, Timothy was to grow spiritually so that the whole church could see his spiritual progress and imitate it.

No pastor can lead his people where he has not been himself. “Such as I have, give I thee” is a basic principle of life and ministry (Acts 3:6).

The pastor (or church member) **who is not growing is actually going backward**, for it is **impossible to stand still in the Christian life**. In his living, teaching, preaching, and leading, the minister **must give evidence of spiritual growth**. But what are factors that make spiritual progress possible?

Emphasize God's Word (v. 13).

“Give attendance to” means “devote yourself to, be absorbed in.” Ministering the Word was not something Timothy was to do after he had done other things; **it was to be the most important thing he did.** Reading means the public reading of Scripture in the local assembly. The Jewish people always had the reading of the Law and the Prophets in their synagogues, and this practice carried over into Christian churches. Jesus read the Scriptures in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16ff), and Paul often read the lessons when he visited a synagogue (Acts 13:15).

In my itinerant ministry, I have noted that many churches have dispensed with the public reading of God's Word; and I am disappointed. They have time for "special music" and endless announcements, but there is no time for the reading of the Bible. The pastor may read a text before he preaches, but that is a different thing. Every local church ought to have a schedule of Bible readings for the public services. It is commanded by Scripture that we read God's Word in the public assemblies. (I might add that **those who read the Word publicly ought to prepare themselves privately**. Nobody should be asked "at the last minute" to read the Scriptures publicly. The Bible deserves the best we can give.)

Exhortation (1 Tim. 4:13) literally means “encouragement” and suggests the applying of the Word to the lives of the people. The pastor was to read the Word, explain it, and apply it. Doctrine means “teaching,” and is a major emphasis in the pastoral letters. There are at least twenty-two references to “teaching” or “doctrine” in these thirteen chapters.

“**Apt to teach**” is one of the qualifications of a minister (1 Tim. 3:2); and it has been correctly said, “Apt to teach implies apt to learn.” **A growing minister (or church member) must be a student of the Word.** Before he teaches others he must teach himself (Rom. 2:21). His spiritual progress is an example to his flock and an encouragement to others.

Use your spiritual gifts (v. 14).

So much has been written in recent years about spiritual gifts that we have almost forgotten the graces of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). The word gift is the Greek word charisma. It simply means “a gracious gift from God.” (The world uses the word charisma to describe a person with magnetic personality and commanding appearance.) Every Christian has the gift of the Spirit (Rom. 8:9) and at least one gift from the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:1–11). The gift of the Spirit, and the gifts from the Spirit, are bestowed by God at the moment of conversion (see 1 Cor. 12:13ff).

However, **when God calls a believer** into a special place of ministry, He can (and often does) **impart a spiritual gift for that task.**

When Timothy was ordained by the elders (“presbytery”), he received an enabling gift from God when the elders laid hands on him. But for some reason, Timothy had neglected to cultivate this gift which was so necessary to his spiritual progress and ministry. In fact, Paul had to admonish him in his second letter, **“Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands”** (2 Tim. 1:6).

It is encouraging to know that the God who calls us also equips us to do His work. We have nothing in ourselves that enables us to serve Him; the ministry must all come from God (1 Cor. 15:9–10; Phil. 4:13; 1 Tim. 1:12).

However, we must not be passive; we must cultivate God's gifts, use them, and develop them in the ministry of the local church and wherever God puts us.