

Exercising unto Godliness

Key Verses:
***“Exercise thyself
rather unto
godliness. For
bodily exercise
profiteth little: but
godliness is
profitable unto all
things, having
promise of the life
that now is, and of
that which is
to come.”***
—I Timothy 4:7,8

Selected Scripture:
I Timothy 4:7-16

In nature, Paul’s encouragement of Timothy can be applied to each member of the church.

In our Key Verses, Paul encourages Timothy to consider the contrast between bodily exercise and godliness. The *New International Version* reads, “Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” Many studies have shown the psychological benefits of exercise, including decreased symptoms of both depression and anxiety, reduced stress levels, and

In Paul’s first letter to Timothy, the apostle calls him “my own son in the faith.” (I Tim. 1:1,2) There is evidence that Timothy lacked confidence when Paul first called him to enter the ministry. The apostle subsequently reminded him of the faith demonstrated by his mother and grandmother, and that he not submit to the “spirit of fear.” (II Tim. 1:5-7) In our Selected Scripture, the apostle exhorts Timothy, “Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young.” (I Tim. 4:12, *International Standard Version*) Though personal in

increased self-esteem and confidence. Elsewhere the apostle states that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit given by God and purchased with the precious blood of Christ. We should therefore glorify God by keeping ourselves fit for his service.—I Cor. 6:19,20

Having acknowledged the practical value of physical exercise, Paul immediately stresses the superiority of exercising “unto godliness.” He reminds Timothy of his pastoral obligations, not because he has forgotten or neglected to do them, but to encourage him to continue in this way. He tells Timothy to instruct the church to refuse and reject all profane and mythical teachings and exhort to the exercise of true godliness. He is to encourage the brethren to acknowledge God’s faithfulness and see the acceptableness of the divine message. Timothy is to remind believers of the privilege of laboring and suffering reproach for the sake of Christ. He is to teach them to “trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men.”—I Tim. 4:7-10

Paul tells the youthful Timothy to “be an example of the believers.” (vs. 12) His words, conduct, love, spirit, faith, and purity are to be an example, not merely in public speaking, but also in his daily affairs of life. Such an example must begin inwardly, in his heart and mind. Then the inner graces of his Christian character are to be manifested outwardly in his speech, conduct, and actions. Paul concludes his exhortation to Timothy, saying “Till I come, give attendance to reading, ... to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, ... Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them.”—vss. 13-15

The calling and faithfulness of every Christian rests on the principles of “righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph. 4:24) Believers are summoned to reflect God’s character: “As he which called you is holy, be ye yourselves holy in all manner of living.”—I Pet. 1:15, *Revised Version* ■