

# Pursuing Godliness

## 1 Timothy 4:6-11

(CCF 11.30.25)

### Intro

At the school where Brandi and I teach, I was once responsible for most of the *new student interviews*...

- And during those interviews I would talk with prospective students about the 3-fold vision of our school — ***Engaging Minds, Pursuing Christ*** and ***Discovering Greatness***...

I would ask the students to tell me what they think each part of the vision means, and I especially enjoyed spending time helping the students to think about what ***Pursuing Christ*** looks like...

- I reminded students that the word ***pursuing*** is not a ***passive*** word — it is ***active***...

Sometimes we would talk about the game of *tag* — about what it means to ***pursue*** the person you are trying to tag...

- We might even talk about the nature shows that they have seen — where a predator is ***pursuing*** his prey...

My goal was to help students realize that ***Pursuing Christ*** is something that takes ***effort*** and ***intention*** — it is *not* something that just happens by accident...

- *Because a ***pursuit*** is always the result of ***choice*** — it is the decision that ***something*** or ***someone*** is worth going after...*

*And this is just what we have in the passage that we will be studying this morning...*

In this section of 1 Timothy, Paul will exhort his son in the faith to **Pursue Godliness** — *to actively seek to become more like God* — and to pursue this goal with his entire being...

*So, it is this topic of **Pursuing Godliness** that we will be focusing on as we study...*

**1 Timothy 4:6-11 (NKJV) [please follow along as I read...]**

**6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.**

**7 But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.**

**8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.**

**9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.**

**10 For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.**

**11 These things command and teach.**

*I've divided this passage into two sections...*

**1) Diet for Godliness**

**2) Discipline for Godliness**

*Let's move into our first section...*

## **1) Diet for Godliness (vs 6-7a)**

*Now, I understand that I should not be talking about **diet** when we are in the heart of the holiday season — but stay with me...*

- So, when it comes to **diet** — *what we consume* — we understand that what we **refuse to eat** is just important as what we **choose to eat**...

If we are seeking good health is not enough for us to **choose** to eat fruits and vegetables and proteins — we must also **refuse** to eat those foods that are detrimental to our health...

- And it is certain that most of us are *inconsistent* in this area of our lives — our diets are a mix of *healthy* foods and *unhealthy* foods...

*But when it comes to our spiritual diet we should be **much more discerning**...*

We must be very careful regarding what we **choose** and what we **refuse** because our **physical diet** only impacts **this life**...

- But our **spiritual diet** impacts both **this life** and **the life to come**...

*With that said, let's move into the first verse of our study...*

**6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ,**

**instruct** — *to remind, to suggest, to point out...*

This word **does not** have the idea of *commanding people* or of *forcing obedience...*

- *Instead, it refers to gentle, humble persuasion...*

This word is also in the **present tense** indicating that Timothy was to be **continually instructing his people...**

- [ex. We need continual reminders that we should be eating properly because there are so many temptations to eat poorly — *commercials can make even Burger King look good...*]

Likewise, we need continual reminders to *pursue a diet of godliness* because there are so many temptations to *pursue ungodliness...*

*Continuing on in vs 6...*

## **If you instruct the brethren**

**brethren** — *Gr. word for "brother," adelphos — which literally means "from the same womb"...*

This is a reminder that Christians are **brethren** — we are brothers and sisters because we each have the same heavenly Father — we have each been adopted into the same spiritual family...

### **John 1:12 (NKJV)**

**But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:**

*For more on this subject, would you please turn to...*

**Romans 8:14-17 (NKJV)**

**14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.**

**15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”**

**16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,**

**17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.**

- [expand on importance of treating one another as brothers and sisters — Our Father wants us to get along as siblings...]

*Now, as we turn back to 1 Timothy 4:6 we read again...*

**If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ,**

*Here Paul reminds Pastor Timothy that the pastor’s primary job is the instruction of the brethren...*

**If the pastor of a fellowship does not **instruct the brethren in these things**, then he isn’t really a good minister of Jesus Christ...**

- It is also important to understand that this **instruction** is not limited to teaching from the pulpit on Sunday...

Just as the Lord Jesus instructed His disciples with His **presence** and His **practice** — as well as with His **words** — so the pastor's entire life should be instruction in godliness...

- [expand — no pastor will fulfill this completely — but there should be increasing maturity — an increasing conformity to Christ...]

*Continuing on in 1 Timothy 4:6 we read...*

**If you instruct the brethren in these things,**

- What are the **these things** to which Paul is referring?...

It could be to the things covered in vs 1-5 of this chapter but I believe Paul is most likely referring to *everything* that he has written in this letter...

*It seems clear that if Timothy continually offered a diet of these truths to the brethren then Paul says that Timothy...*

**will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.**

**minister** — *servant...*

- This is a simple but needed reminder that pastors and elders are to be a servant-leaders...[expand]

*To see what the Apostle Peter had to say on this subject, would you please turn near the end of your Bibles to...*

## 1 Peter 5:1-4 (NKJV)

1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:

2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

*As we turn back to 1 Timothy 4:6 please look again at the words...*

**you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.**

This is a reminder that the most effective ministers are those who *persevere as students of the Word of God...*

- They started in the Word — they continued in the Word — they finished in the Word...

The fact is, a ***continual diet*** of the truths of Scripture is essential to the spiritual health and godliness of *every Christian*, but this is especially true of spiritual leaders like Timothy...

- It is only as a pastor reads the Word, studies the Word, meditates on the Word, and faithfully teaches the Word that he can fulfill his calling...

*Speaking on this subject, one pastor wrote...*

***“Constant spiritual nourishment is essential. Out of it our lives and teaching flow. Ministry work must never become so demanding that the first priority of spending time in personal spiritual renewal and growth is ignored. Ministry will lose its power and effectiveness when leaders neglect their [own] spiritual development.”***

*Regarding the pastor’s relationship to the Word of God, Paul wrote several strong exhortations in 2 Timothy — so please turn there...*

### **2 Timothy 2:15-16 (NKJV)**

**15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

**16 But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.**

*Now to...*

### **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)**

**16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,**

**17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

*Finally, please turn to...*

## 2 Timothy 4:2-4 (NKJV)

**2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.**

**3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;**

**4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**

*This leads into our next verse as we turn back to 1 Timothy 4 and move into vs...*

### **7 But reject profane and old wives' fables,**

Just as a diet of godliness involves ***choosing*** to be **nourished in the words of faith and good doctrine**, it also involves the ***rejecting*** of **profane and old wives' fables...**

**reject** — *to refuse, decline, avoid...*

- [ex. my students' attitude when I assign homework...]

**profane** — *worldly, unholy, common; the absence of a divine or sacred character...*

**old wives' fables** — *fictions, falsehoods perpetuated through tradition...*

Now, we don't have time this morning to focus on all the things that we should ***refuse*** as we pursue a ***Diet for Godliness...***

*Instead, I want to direct your attention to a helpful verse that enables us to discern what we should **choose** and what we should **refuse** when it comes to a **Diet for Godliness**...*

### **Philippians 4:8 (NKJV)**

**Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—  
meditate on these things.**

As we focus our time and attention on *these things* — on this **Diet for Godliness** — we will find ourselves nourished in the Word of God...

*With that said, we turn now from **Diet for Godliness** to our second section...*

## **2) Discipline for Godliness (vs 7b-11)**

Now, as we enter this section it must be said that many view **discipline** as **legalism** — but this is just not true...

### ***One commentary***

*“Legalism is self-centered, but discipline is God-centered. The legalistic heart says, ‘I will do this thing to gain merit with God.’ The disciplined heart says, ‘I will do this thing because I love God and want to please him.’”*

The fact is, **discipline** is indispensable for success in any area of life...

- Athletes, musicians, authors, filmmakers, parents, teachers, blue-collar workers, white-collar workers — you name it — each must be disciplined if in order to be successful...

[ex. athletes spend countless hours working on their game — and yet no one refers to it as legalism...]

- Also, please notice that the words **discipline** and **disciple** are related — it is impossible to be a **disciple** without exhibiting **discipline**...

*Now, as we move on in 1 Timothy 4:7 Paul writes of the **Discipline for Godliness**...*

**and exercise yourself toward godliness.**

You see, Paul wants Timothy to **strive toward godliness** — to give his all for an imperishable prize — for a prize that only the Lord can bestow on His faithful servants...

- Ultimately, Paul is comparing the rigorous, self-sacrificing training that an athlete undergoes with the spiritual self-discipline that is the path to godliness...

*For more on this subject, would you please turn to...*

## 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NKJV)

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.

27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

*As we turn back to 1 Timothy 4:7 please notice the word...*

**toward** — *with a view to...*

Just as an athlete **exercises** *with a view to* excelling in athletic contests, so Timothy is exhorted to **exercise** *with a view to excelling in godliness...*[expand]

- This reminds us that we cannot drift into godliness — we must choose to expend effort — we must be disciplined toward godliness...

**godliness** — *a proper attitude and response toward God; reverence and respect toward God...*

The word **godliness** comes from the old English word **godlikeness** — to have the *character and attitude* of God...

Without question, godliness is the most worthy goal possible for those who are made in the image of God...

- Godliness is a much more worthy goal than any attainment related to physical exercise...

It is vital that we understand that the phrase **exercise yourself toward godliness** in this context primarily refers to *training ourselves in and by the Scriptures for the purpose of godliness*...

- Our diet is to be the Scriptures, and we are to *exercise* or *discipline* ourselves in the Scriptures — the Word of God is both our spiritual food and our spiritual weight room...[expand]

## **8 For bodily exercise profits a little,**

You don't have to be a certified personal trainer to realize that bodily exercise *is profitable*...

- Improved cardiovascular health and increased mobility are just two of the many benefits that result from bodily exercise...

Be that as it may, Paul reminds Timothy (and us) that bodily exercise only **profits a little** — literally, “*for a little*”...

- In other words, bodily exercise is limited in at least two ways — it is limited in **duration** and in **scope**...

Bodily exercise is limited in **duration** because it is only good for a little while — no matter how hard we train, we are fighting a losing battle with regard to our physical health...[expand]

Also, bodily exercise is limited in **scope** because it is unable to improve us *spiritually* — some of the most physically fit people in the world are some of the most ungodly...

*So, bodily exercise profits a little...*

**but godliness is profitable for all things,**

Simply but, godliness is helpful in *every single area of life...*

- And before you disagree with me — if you find an area where **godliness** is not **profitable** then you know that that is something that you should not be doing...[expand]🤔

*Paul continues on in vs 8...*

**godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.**

No matter how hard we work out, our bodies will eventually fail us — but godliness is profitable both in **this life** and in **the life to come...**

*I love how the Apostle Paul put it in...*

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NKJV)**

**16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.**

**17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,**

**18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.**

- [expand on the idea of “hard now, easy later” — investing in godliness daily will result in eternal and imperishable benefits...]

*The Lord Jesus spoke of this in...*

### **Matthew 6:19-21 (NKJV)**

**19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;**

**20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.**

**21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

We must beware of focusing on the temporary to the detriment of the eternal...[expand]

- If you and I primarily focus on **bodily exercise** instead of **godliness** we will have completely missed the point of this life...  
[expand]

*We must not miss the fact that as believers we will be judged regarding our Discipline for Godliness at the Judgment Seat of Christ...*

## 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 (NKJV)

**9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.**

**10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

*Moving on now in 1 Timothy 4 to vs...*

**9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.**

*Here Paul is referring to what he just wrote in vs 8...*

Essentially, Paul is reaffirming the fact that godliness is of **widespread** and **eternal value** and that **this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance...**

**10 For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach,**

The goal or **end** of Paul's **labor** was that people would attain godliness and be eternally enriched...

**labor** — *grow weary; work with effort, toil...*

**suffer reproach** — *to find fault in a way that demeans the other, reproach, revile, mock, heap insults upon...*

Here we have a picture of an athlete straining and giving his best to win while at the same time being mocked and jeered by those who hate him...

**LESSON — A Christian who wants to excel must work at it, by the grace of God and for the glory of God...**

- ***But that Christian must expect to be criticized, mocked and hated...***

*Continuing on in vs 10...*

**For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God,**

**trust** — *hope; denotes an action with continuing results...*

Paul's **trust** or **hope** in the Lord was **on-going** and as a result it **continually** motivated him...

- This is a reminder that believers are *saved in hope and live and serve in the hope of eternal life...*

And our *hope* is *living* because we serve **the living God...**

**David Guzik**

*“This is to be the great motto of the Christian life. Even as David challenged Goliath in the name of the living God, so our trust in the living God empowers us to accomplish great things for His glory.”*

*Continuing on in vs 10 we read...*

**because we trust in the living God, the Savior of all men,**

It must be stated that there are several different interpretations regarding what Paul is saying here...

*Before I explain what I understand this to mean, I will let you know what it is not saying...*

- It is definitely *not saying* that God is the **Savior of all men** in the sense that all men will be saved...

Tragically, the Scriptures teach that most of humanity refuses to believe and that all who reject the salvation that the Lord Jesus offers will enter into eternal condemnation...

*The Lord Jesus Himself said this in the Sermon on the Mount...*

**Matthew 7:13-14 (NKJV)**

**13 “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.**

**14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”**

So, when Paul refers to **the living God** as the **Savior of all men** I believe that he is emphasizing the fact that the priority must be kept on the message of Jesus Christ...

It isn't that all men will be saved but that there is ***only one Savior for all men...***

It isn't as if Christians have one Savior and others might have another savior — anyone who is going to be saved must be saved by the Lord Jesus Christ...

*The Apostle Peter made this clear in...*

### **Acts 4:12 (NKJV)**

**“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

*Now to the last part of vs 10 in 1 Timothy 4...*

**who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.**

Another way to put it is to say that **the Living God** is the *potential Savior* of all men and the *actual Savior* of those who believe...

The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is **sufficient** for all but **efficient** only for those who believe...

*This ties in with what we read in...*

### **1 Timothy 2:1-6 (NKJV) [please turn there]**

**1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,**

**2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.**

**3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,**

**4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

**5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,**

**6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,**

*The Apostle John writes in...*

**1 John 2:2 (NKJV)**

**And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.**

The big point is that the Lord Jesus' work is ***adequate*** to save all, but only ***effective*** in saving those who come to Him *by faith*...

***Warren Wiersbe***

*"It is faith that saves one's soul. Since God's will is for all men to be saved, and since Christ gave Himself as a ransom for all, then any lost sinner can trust Christ and be saved. Christ is 'the Savior of all men,' so nobody need despair."*

***19th Century Commentator Adam Clarke wrote...***

*"What God intends for ALL, he actually gives to them that believe in Christ, who died for the sins of the world and tasted death for every man. As all have been purchased by his blood so all may believe; and consequently all may be saved. Those that perish, perish through their own fault."*

*This brings us to our final verse...*

## 11 These things command and teach.

This has the unmistakable note of authority...

- Timothy was not to enter the pulpit with speculations and opinions and theories of men...

Instead, he was to fearlessly proclaim God's Word as a command — to teach truth unflinchingly — and then to leave the results to the Lord...

### Conclusion

*Now, we will stop here for today, but before we close in worship through song, I will leave you with two application questions...*

**1) Are you nourishing yourself on a Diet for Godliness — is the Word of God your guide for what you choose and what you refuse?...[expand]**

**2) Are you exercising yourself toward godliness — are you on a regimen of Discipline for Godliness — recognizing that godliness is of the highest benefit both in this life and in the life to come?...[expand]**

*Let's pray...*