

You probably don't want your kids to hear this, but I hated school. I was good at it, but I hated going to school – I'd much rather be home on the farm. But in Grade 9, I thought things were going to get a bit better, because for the first time, we actually got a little bit of choice in what subjects we did.

As it turned out (as I remember it) I think I was one of only 3 boys in the typing class.

- One lad, I'm pretty sure he was only there because he wanted to be with the girls;*
- Another lad was there because typing was a skill he wanted to learn;*
- And me, I was only there because I was frustrated by the other options.*

Just about every boy chose to do Woodwork; Metalwork; and Tech Drawing. But my experience of those subjects in Grade 8 I found frustrating. It would take us all term to make something I could make in an afternoon at home...

And so, I thought I might as well learn to type (something new). And so, instead of Woodwork, Metal Work & Tech Drawing, I took Typing; Business Principles; and Geography.

Anyway, I learned how to touch-type on an old mechanical clunker (clack; clack; clack,, and you'd have to hit the keys hard)... Little did I realise, that within a decade, computers would be in every home, and how useful the skill of touch-typing was going to be for me, my whole life.

That training for me – I've never been sorry I did it.

Let's have a little recap:

We finished off last week, with Paul telling Timothy, “Bodily training is of slight value, but **train yourself for godliness**, because **godliness is of value in every way**.”

A very real problem in the church, is wrong doctrine (or having a wrong understanding of the faith). And wrong doctrine (wrong understanding of the faith), comes into the church (mainly) by those whose consciences are seared... The self-delusion of sin, convinces a person that “Because it feels right to me, it must be right...” Even if it's contrary to God's word.

And so, **training in Godliness** is the **best** way to stop ourselves from being misled by a self-delusion of sin.

That's where we got up to last week, and today, we're going to pick it up at V10.

¹⁰ For to this end [To what end? Being training in godliness / being trained in words of faith and good doctrine]...

¹⁰ For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, especially [that is] of those who believe.

(He's not the saviour of **un**believers – he's the saviour of all people (Jew & Gentile; Black & White; Men & Women; Young and old) – all people who believe.

Alright, so we train in holiness, because our hope is set on the living God... We're not training in holiness to **get** hope. We already have the hope. And because of the hope we have – because of the faith that we have in our living God, we toil and we strive to be trained in godliness...

So, as Disciples of Jesus, being trained in godliness, is what we strive for. It is **the** priority of life... Why wouldn't it be?

And yet, in practice, "training in godliness", is often, really low down on a person's priority list... Do you know why? It's because being trained in godliness, can be a very humbling thing...

It's humbling for me:

I'm not God, you see... You knew that didn't you? And so, for me to be trained in Godliness, means I'm going to be trained to lessen the "Michael-ness" and increase the Christ-likeness.

And so, being trained in Godliness, means I'm going to be confronted with the reality of sin in my life that I need to get rid of... And I'm going to be taught to shift my focus from worldly stuff that appeals to my flesh, to things of eternal value, and things of the Spirit...

And guess what – you’re not God either. And so, for **you** to be trained in Godliness, **you’re** going to learn that there’s less of **you** to be had, and more of God... You might learn that things that are important to you, aren’t even a speck of dust on God’s scale of priorities...

And so, we as a church, should toil and strive to be trained in godliness... But, not many churches are good at that.

Some are more about platitudes. They present an anaemic Jesus and they value having an acceptance of all things, that tends to lull its people to an empty, insincere faith.

Others (on the other hand) adopt a church-growth model, where either:

- a) the basic gospel message on how to **get** saved, is the only message that’s preached, and it happens every Sunday, so they’re taught how to **get** saved, not how to **be** the saved.; or
- b) the message that’s given is more of a motivational talk, telling their listeners, how they can improve their life-experience...

The **biblical** model, however, is for the church to be teaching and training in godliness... **Most** teaching in the church, is supposed to be for those who **are** saved, because who are the church? The church are the saved. And because **we** are saved, and the Living God is our Hope, **Godliness** is how we now seek to live.

Righto, Paul's advice to Timothy, I don't think would make him the world's most popular pastor today. He says

¹¹ Command and teach these things.

Now, in my experience, not everybody wants to be taught. In fact, there are **many**, who just want to be affirmed... And who likes being commanded??? *“Oh, that wretched preacher – there he goes again – who does he think he is, telling us what to do....”*

And that's why it's really important, for a pastor, to lead by example.

Paul says to Timothy, **¹² Let no one despise you for your youth**

Now, we don't know how old Timothy was at this point, but the point is, it's not a person's age that makes them suitable for leadership. It's **spiritual** maturity and calling... BTW, I've said before, Spiritual maturity has nothing to do with how flash one's spiritual gifts are – Spiritual maturity is about godliness...

And so, it's important for Timothy, if he is training **others** in Godliness, for he himself, to be a godly man,,, which is why Paul tells him to set an example:

- in speech,
- in conduct,
- in love,

- in faith,
- in purity.

Now, those traits, are something that the youth often lack, but not only the youth... And so, whether we're young, or whether we're old, **because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour**, we also, should be seeking to be Godly examples in:

- the way we speak;
- the way we live;
- the way we love God and love others;
- that we'd be a people of faith; and
- a people of purity

And that's what training in Godliness is working us toward. And so, Paul says to Timothy:

V¹³ ... **devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.**

Possibly years earlier, when the elders laid their hands on Timothy, to pray for him, and to set him apart into the ministry of the church, a prophecy had been given. Now, we don't have a record of that prophecy, so we don't know what was said, but reading between the lines, it seems pretty obvious, that it was to do with preaching and teaching. Timothy had been given a gift by God (preach & teach), and because he had been given a gift, it was important he should use it.

One of my favourite images of the church, is how we (as the church) are a body... We are all different, and we all have different gifts.

You have gifts that I do not have, and so you will be called to serve God in ways that I am not able to. Likewise, I have gifts that you don't have, and so I will be able to serve God in ways that **you** are not able to... The important thing is, every one of us have spiritual gifts, and if any of us are not using the gifts that God has given us, it's like the body missing a body-part...

And so, Paul says, Timothy, don't neglect your gifts...

Timothy's gifts, were to be put to use, to train the church in Godliness... And there's 3 elements that Paul highlights:
devote yourself:

1. to the public reading of Scripture,
2. to exhortation,
3. to teaching.

Back in the day, the public reading of Scripture would've been really important, because not everyone could read. And of those who **could** read, not many had access to the Scrolls of Scripture. BTW, Scripture back then, was the Old Testament... Little did Paul realise, that as he wrote this letter to Timothy, he was writing what would become part of Scripture for us today...

But the fact that we all have our own bibles today, doesn't mean that the public reading of Scripture isn't important any more. You see, the reading of Scripture; Exhortation; and

Teaching, are meant to be held together. This is central to Christian worship, and it's central, to our training in Godliness.

To be trained in the true faith and **good** doctrine, means we need to start with the right source information.

We don't:

- begin with philosophy, or psychology;
- teach scientific theory;
- begin with sociology;
- nor do we form our message around popular opinion;

We begin with **God's** word. God's word, is the source of good doctrine.

And so make a practice of reading your Bible:

- Read it at home;
- Read it together in a Bible Study group;
- Read it together at church...

And we let **God's** word:

- help us to understand the natural world around us;
- reveal why people think the way they do;
- help us to understand why popular opinion is so much against God;
- inform us about the state of our own Godlessness, and train us in Godliness...

And when we read Scripture, let us never take up the deceptive practice of dividing the bible up into single verses or parts of verses... The word of God, speaks as it is... A lot of

the time people are led into wrong doctrine, is when a verse gets taken completely out of context, and is used to say something that it's not at all talking about.

So, let's read God's word, and let's study it together.

Now, you know as well as I do, there's 2 common difficulties with reading God's word.

1. Sometimes it's not easy to understand.

e.g.

There might be connections to be made with other bits of scripture, but we're unaware of those connections,, And that's why we need people, who have a gift of teaching, to **teach** us the Scriptures, and to help us to understand what they mean.

2. The second difficulty, is when the Scripture is understood – we know what it means – the difficulty is, we're reluctant to apply it. And that's what exhortation is about.

Exhortation, is to issue a challenge, that **demand**s a response.

The first exhortation you might've heard, was when you first became a Christian... You heard the Gospel proclaimed: You're a sinner in need of a saviour... And the preacher said to you, "Do not go home, until you make a decision for Jesus" ...

And I'm going to ask you that question right now: "Have you surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ?"

To be saved, we have to repent of sin, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptised into the Name of Jesus.... And I am exhorting you – I am issuing you with a challenge, that demands a response: Have you done this? Have you:

- repented of sin;
- believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;
- been forgiven of all your wrongdoings;
- been baptised into the Name of Jesus.

If you haven't, I'm exhorting you now. I am issuing you a challenge that demands a response.

But I'm warning you, this, is only the first of **many** exhortations that you're going to need to respond to, during your life of training in godliness.

You see, being a disciple of Jesus, means we don't decide for ourselves what Godliness looks like – it's about being **trained** in Godliness... And as we read the Scriptures, the Scriptures are going to constantly challenge us, about changes that we need to make in our lives – changes that help us reflect Godliness and Christ-likeness...

But the thing is, God's model of teaching, is **not** a modern, self-directed approach to learning. In the church, God has given gifts of preaching and teaching. As we are **taught** God's word, we begin to understand the ways of God, and we

understand how our own selves (perhaps the way we think/brought up) might be in opposition to what He would have us become...

And that's where exhortation comes in. Timothy was told to **command** and **teach** these things... You see, God's word, and the commandments of God, - they're not an optional extra... Growth in Godliness, sometimes requires major life-changes... It may even require a complete change in what you understand a Christian to be...

For some, being a Christian, is a religion:

- I say this prayer, and I'm saved; or
- I'm a member of the right church & I'm saved; (not BD)
- I pray occasionally, and I'm all good;
- I believe what I believe, and because I'm sincere about it, it's all good

For others, their understanding of Godliness, might mean:

- I think like this;
- I stand against this;
- I vote like this;

Alright, it's about a "persona".. – That's what the Christian people do...

But as we read God's word, we're going to be exhorted over and over again, about how God is transforming us to become more like Christ – not Christ the judge, but Christ,:

- the suffering servant
- the Holy One;

- the Just one...

More:

- love
- joy;
- peace;
- patience;
- kindness;
- goodness;
- faithfulness;
- gentleness;
- self-control;

Now the thing is, when we hear God's word – when it's taught – When the wretched preacher exhorts us to make massive changes in our lives,,,,, what do we do with that?

I make my own corned meat. Whole rumps, are about the cheapest meat you can buy, and I cut the best of it into steak, and turn the rest of it into corned meat... Now, to make corned meat, you have your secret recipe to make up the brine, and then you inject it into the meat, and then you put it into a bucket of brine, to let it soak. (10days-2weeks). And it goes right through it, and it transforms from raw flesh, into corned meat...

V15 says:

¹⁵ Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.

Timothy is a teacher, but even **Timothy** has to immerse himself into God's word, and into Godly teaching...

And this is something I hope you realise. I've said it often enough, that the main person I'm preaching to, is myself. As I immerse **myself** into God's word, and as I hear Godly teaching, **I** am constantly being challenged by it... and hopefully, some of you may even notice me being changed... Every time I prepare for a message, I not only study God's word, I immerse myself in His teaching. And I praise God, for those Bible teachers who have written commentaries, to teach me, and to help me to understand His word...

And like that meat, soaking in the brine, let's not hear God's word and say, "No, no, that's off limits God – you're not coming into me"... Immerse yourself and take it in, to be transformed.

Righto, let's move on:

2 years ago, Australia built and gave to Samoa, a brand new patrol boat, valued at \$30 000 000. But they've run it aground and it's now totally ruined. So it was announced last week, we're going to buy them another one...

Right back in chapter 1, Paul used an example of a shipwreck, to describe what can happen to one's faith when they reject **true** faith and good conscience, **some have made shipwreck of their faith...** It's a picture of total ruination...

And so, in V16

¹⁶ Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

If bad doctrine – if having a ‘messed up faith’, can totally shipwreck faith, **Timothy**, keep a close watch on yourself, and keep a close watch on what you teach...

Keep a close watch on:

- your Godliness – how you live;
- what you receive – Don’t pay attention to myths/wives-tales/theories/innuendo...
You stick with the truth of God’s Word;
- the teaching – Is the teaching based on the word of God, and is it true **to** the Word of God?

Persist in this, to save yourself, and to save those who hear what you teach... Save them from what??? Persistent Godly teaching in **good** doctrine, saves us from shipwrecked faith...

Training in Godliness, is what keeps a disciple of Jesus, following the real Jesus, and growing in Christ-likeness.

Let’s wrap it up:

Something that struck me through the whole of chapter 4, is how “hands-on” and “**determined**”, the Christian life is meant

to be... If we just float along.... eh... We'll probably end up shipwrecked...

Did you notice the number of doing words today:

- we toil and strive
- command and teach;
- set an example;
- devote yourself;
- public reading of Scripture;
- exhortation;
- teaching;
- practice these things;
- immerse yourself in them;
- keep a close watch;
- persist
- save yourself;
- save your hearers...

Living the Christian life, isn't about floating along...
"Floating along", is what leads to shipwreck...

Toil; Strive; Persist..., Training in Godliness, because our hope is set on the Living God who saved us...

Let's pray:

Lord,
we want to thank You,
that You provide everything we need for training in
Godliness.

Lord,
forgive us for the times we have just floated along;
For when we haven't devoted ourselves to:

- the public reading of Scripture;
- exhortation;
- teaching...

Forgive us for when we haven't been good examples in:

- the way we speak;
- what we do;
- that we haven't loved;
- that our faith has been weak or misguided;
- purity lacking...

Lord, give us a resolve,
to be devoted to You,
and so, devoted to our training in Godliness.

Lord, search us, and change us,
to make us more like Your Son,
to Your glory,

Amen.