



## “HOW TO BE A GOOD SERVANT OF CHRIST”

### 1 Timothy 4:6-11

**Theme:** *Through God's grace, every Christian can effectively serve Jesus Christ.*

**Introduction:** How many of us are committed to mediocrity without realizing it? Some drift through life – even their Christian lives – without aspiration, direction, or satisfaction. Theirs is a faith that is in a maintenance mode that produces nothing to Christ's glory. They get by, perhaps without grievous sin but also without accomplishment. There is little development of Christlikeness or godliness. Service for Jesus Christ is a matter they rely on others to provide. They know that if the entire church were exactly like they are, it would be greatly anemic, ineffective, and unfulfilling.

God intends that every believer thrive – not because of their abilities, but because of the abundance of His grace whereby even the least talented among us can be gloriously fruitful to the glory of Christ. In our text, Paul directs Timothy on how to be an effective minister. Yet, the principles God's Spirit introduces here will enable any believer to serve Jesus Christ effectively. Our text convinces us that ***“through God's grace, every Christian can effectively serve Jesus Christ.”***

- I. Attend to Personal Faith – 4:6
- II. Avoid Distractions – 4:7a
- III. Acquire Godliness – 4:7b-8
- IV. Attach Hope in Christ – 4:9-10
- V. Announce the Truth – 4:11

### I. ATTEND TO PERSONAL FAITH – 4:6

#### A. Cultivate Personal Faith

1. The concentration on the Word of God referenced in the previous verse – the authority of God's Word to inform us about how He has provided for us is emphasized by Paul.
2. We are to be ***“pointing out these things to the brethren”*** - warning of those who would twist or pervert the truth for their own ends and

advocating for reliance and faith in God's Word.

3. As we look to the Word as our authority, we *"... will be ... constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of sound doctrine."*
4. Our responsibility is for "life-long-learning" in God's Word – [ἐντρέφω] – to be trained or reared in the truth.
5. What we feed on will determine our health and strength.
6. We know our faith is sourced in God's Word and strengthened by God's Word - *Romans 10:17; Acts 20:32.*

## B. Concentrate on Personal Faith

1. First, our concentration must be on *"the words of the faith"* – a reference to the content of Scripture ... that is, what the Scriptures say.
2. Second, our concentration must be on *"the sound doctrine"* – a reference to the teachings of Scripture or how *"the words of the faith"* are presented as organized, Spirit-led interpretations of Scripture – exegetical theology that drives systematic theology.
3. Third, our concentration must be constant – *"... which you have been following"* [παρακολουθέω] – a term referring to viewing God's Word as the determining authority in all matters of faith and practice – what you believe and how you live; this addresses the regular application of truth.
4. Too many people pick and choose what portions of the Bible they embrace – they'll dismiss creationism, inerrancy, justification by faith alone, a literal hell, or some other teaching of Scripture they don't prefer and then wonder why they are not effective in influencing others to follow Christ more.
5. If you are going to be an effective servant of Jesus Christ, you must attend to your faith, subjecting yourself to the Word of God as your final authority, conforming your beliefs, practices, and priorities according to what it says.

## II. AVOID DISTRACTIONS – *4:7a*

### A. The Call for Discernment

1. One of the ways we can consistently *Attend to our Faith* is to *Avoid Distractions* from God's Word.
2. There are so many things that vie for our attention – books, blogs, bogus philosophies, perspectives, and positions are constantly rising as rivals to our confidence in God's Word.

3. In the spirit of *sola scriptura*, our faith must rest solely on what God's Word teaches, and we are to **"have nothing to do with worldly fables ...."**
4. **"have nothing to do with ..."** [παραιτέομαι] – to avoid something by declining, refusing, or rejecting those things inconsistent with sound doctrine or the words of the faith.
5. In a world of relativism and tolerance, commitment to truth revealed in God's Word is seen as an exercise of oppression, intolerance, or archaism.
6. Yet, God has called upon His people to recognize that depraved minds generate diversities of aberrant perspectives for which we must discern to recognize what is inconsistent with the truth – cp. **Matthew 7:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22; Ephesians 5:10.**

## B. The Condemnation of Distortions

1. Anything inconsistent with the truth must be identified and rejected as the error it is – **"worldly fables fit only for old women."**
2. **"worldly fables"** [βέβηλος] – refers to stories or tales that are "accessible to everyone and therefore devoid of real significance" – stuff that has been made up by whatever inventive person cares to spin it.
3. Paul says that these **"fables"** are **"fit only for old women"** – a reference to how **"own women"** are eager to hear the newest story or yarn despite how frivolous it might be because they have no productive occupation.
4. It is likely that the reference to **"old women"** takes us back to the infatuation with "endless genealogies" referenced in **1 Timothy 1:4.**

## III. ACQUIRE GODLINESS – **4:7b-8**

### A. The Conditioning Required for Godliness – **v. 7b**

1. This third key to being a good servant of Jesus Christ is the ability to limit oneself to the sufficiency of Christ and His Word – **"On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness."**
2. Since the only means we can gain godliness is the sanctifying influences of God's Word, we must not allow ourselves to be directed by just anything.
3. **"discipline yourself"** [γυμνάζω] – the word from which we get "gymnasium" describing the training and exertions needed to be conditioned for one's sport.
4. Of course, we aren't "working out" toward the end of physical fitness, but **"for the purpose of godliness"** – conformity to Christ – cp. **1 Timothy**

3:16.

5. When athletes are athletically conditioned, they pay attention to adequate rest, proper nutrition, and physical exertions for strength and muscle memory.
6. Likewise, being spiritually conditioned requires that we pay attention to our spiritual health:
  - a) *Strength of our Heart (Cardio conditioning)* – on what have I set my heart? – Luke 10:27.
  - b) *Strength of our Muscles* – can I do the “heavy lifting” of spiritual living and make the necessary changes? – Philippians 4:13.
  - c) *Flexibility* – am I willing to exceed my comfort zones? – Joshua 1:9.
  - d) *Weight* – how much knowledge have I stored up that is not being applied? – Hebrews 4:2.
  - e) *Coordination* – what harmony exists between how we think, how we feel, and what we do? – James 4:17.
  - f) *Reaction Time* – how long does it take me to obey? – James 1:22.
  - g) *Nourishment* – on what am I feeding? – 1 Timothy 4:6.

**B. The Concern Required for Godliness – v. 8**

1. It is not Paul’s point to denounce *“bodily discipline”* – *“for bodily discipline is only of little profit ...”* – comparatively to pursuing godliness.
  - a) *One of our society's obsessions is physical fitness, as people will spend multiple hours every day getting “fit” – or “buff.*
  - b) *Those given to vanity or physical presentation with external form often fail to concern themselves with their conformity to God.*
  - c) *For many, how they look outside is all that matters – cp. Colossians 2:23.*
2. Physical fitness and dietary discipline contribute to one’s overall health, but ungodly people can be healthy.
3. God desires more from us than merely physical discipline, He desires *“godliness”* [εὐσέβεια] – this is the end for which we are disciplining ourselves.
4. We must address far more than behavior, including our reverence and awe of God so influential that it colors our behavior to His glory through piety, devotion, and loyalty out of a fear of God.
5. *“but godliness is profitable for all things ...”* – having a priority on godliness results in both temporal priorities being in order as well as

eternal priorities:

- a) *“Since it holds promise for the present life” – We will seek to discipline ourselves to bring glory to God in our physical lives – both how we exist inwardly and externally.*
- b) *“... and also for the life to come” – the eternal blessings and reward that await the godly.*

#### IV. ATTACH HOPE ON CHRIST – vv. 9-10

##### A. The Conviction of Our Hope – v. 9

1. This eternal perspective is established and preserved by seeing Christ through His Word as the great priority.
2. Paul states this is an essential element in what we believe – *“It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance.”*
3. This is an elemental priority for every effective servant of Christ – we live not for the present values, priorities, and rewards but for eternal values, priorities, and rewards.
4. This is the antithesis of pursuing “Our best life now!” – a pursuit only applicable to someone on the way to Hell.
5. The conviction of our hope is attached to Christ and the eternal life He provides to those who come to Him by faith.

##### B. The Commitment in Our Hope – v. 10a

1. Paul declares: *“For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God ....”*
2. Our commitment to Christ through our hope being fixed on Him causes us to *“labor and strive:”*
  - a) *“labor” [κοπιάω] – exert oneself until weary or tired, to toil.*
  - b) *“strive” [ἀγωνίζομαι] – to engage in a contest for a victory.*
3. The conditioning and spiritual discipline in which we engage allows us to exert ourselves to the glory of Christ Jesus as we wrestle against the spiritual forces of darkness constantly striving against us.

##### C. The Content of Our Hope – v. 10b

1. Again, the key to this is our focus on Christ, who is the content of our hope – *“... because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.”*
2. Our hope is *“fixed”* on the risen Christ Jesus, the *“living God.”*

3. He is also the One through whom the grace of God is extended to all sinners – Jesus has gained a “stay of execution” for *“all men”* through the exercise of “common grace.”
4. Yet Jesus is *“the Savior,”* extending grace in a particular saving way to those who come to Him by faith – *“especially of believers.”* – *Hebrews 6:19-20a.*
5. If you are here today and have not submitted yourself to the truth about Jesus Christ and his work to save you, there is one reason you are still able to do so – God can be patient toward you because Jesus extends common grace toward you to give you an opportunity to repent.
6. Yet, only when you come to Him in faith, with repentance seeking the forgiveness He has to offer you, can He be called your personal Savior.

## V. ANNOUNCE THE TRUTH – *v. 11*

### A. The Authority of the Announcement

1. The final element of being a good servant of Christ is demonstrating your confidence in the Gospel by announcing it.
2. This is seen in your recognition of the authority associated with the truth – it is not an invitation to believe, but a command – *“Prescribe ... these things.”*
3. *“Prescribe”* [παραγγέλλω] – means to announce something that must be done – give orders or direct someone to do something.
4. This demonstrates a commitment to the truth as the final authority for our lives – we must call others to obey the truth.
5. Preaching in our day has become a passive, entertaining, and at times meek presentation of what God’s Word says as an option people might want to embrace when it needs to be a straightforward *“Thus says the Lord”* with a call to comply with it with the warning that to reject it is to your peril.

### B. The Activity in the Announcement

1. Additionally, we are to *“teach these things”* - [ διδάσκω] – to tell people what to do with the truth.
2. If *“prescribe”* describes what to do, *“teaching”* describes how to do it and describes the practical aspect of preaching.

## So What?

1. In what way has “comfortable apathy” contributed to mediocrity in

**my service to Christ Jesus?**

- 2. How can God's grace become more effective in my service to Christ?**
- 3. What can I do today to begin the changes necessary to enhance being a "good servant of Christ?"**

***Through God's grace, every Christian can effectively serve Jesus Christ.***