

Series Plan

Introduction

Part 1: What is a Disciple?

Lesson 1: Definitions: disciple, discipleship, discipline

Lesson 2: Characteristics and Costs of a Disciple

Part 2: Living a Disciplined Life

Lesson 3: The Disciplined Life

Lesson 4: Bible Intake

- Lesson 5: Part a: hearing, reading, and studying
- Lesson 6: Part b: memorizing, meditating, and applying

Lesson 7: Prayer

Lesson 8: Devotions

Lesson 9: Worship

Lesson 10: Evangelism

Lesson 11: Service

Lesson 12: Stewardship

Lesson 13: Other Disciplines: Learning, Fasting

Theme text:

1 Timothy 4:7-8 But refuse profane and old wives fables, and **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.

These verses compare physical exercise to spiritual exercise. What does Paul mean here by “exercise



thyself rather unto godliness ? If we look at the words closely, we will find parallels between physical and spiritual fitness.

exercise = train, discipline. From *gumnadzo*. The picture is that of a Greek gymnasium, where young people would work out, race, wrestle, box, etc.

- not easy requires work, rigorous effort
- regular, periodic or else ineffective
- requires ridding oneself of all encumbrances [The Greek word *gumnos* means “naked. Athletes used to compete without clothes so that nothing would inhibit their efforts.]
- think of spiritual disciplines as exercise, like a trip to the gym for your soul.

thyself = yourself. *Self-discipline*. Nobody can do this for you.

unto = toward, for. Emphasis on goal, result.

godliness = conduct that honors God.

Thus, “train yourself with the goal of living in a way that honors God.

Spiritual fitness ought to be the goal for every Christian. Notice two reasons why spiritual fitness (godliness) should be your goal:

Spiritual fitness is profitable (valuable, beneficial).

Spiritual fitness is more profitable than physical fitness.

Physical fitness benefits “a little. What are some ways?

- strength, stamina, health, feel better



- improved appearance weight loss, muscle tone, etc.

On the other hand, physical exercise is only a “little beneficial.

- Temporary affects this life only, and most eventually lose their physical fitness
- External helps the body but not the soul.
- Limited usefulness. Won't help many areas.

Spiritual fitness is beneficial for “all things.

Name an area in life that spiritual fitness has no bearing upon. There is none. Godliness (conduct that honors God) should be displayed in every area of life.

- home kids obey parents, husbands love wives, wives submit to husbands
- business pay fair wages, be a good worker/employer, work hard, ethical
- church be a member, respect the pastor, separation from erring brothers, financial support.

If spiritual fitness (conduct that honors God) is so valuable, why do we not spend more time in pursuit of it? It is ironic that many Christians expend lots of effort and spend lots of money on improving their health and physical fitness, yet they are unwilling to expend any effort toward spiritual fitness.

“No pain, No gain is true spiritually and physically. If you expend no effort to train yourself spiritually, you will never grow or get strong.

Heb. 5:12-14 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.



Question: What would you look like if your body reflected your spiritual fitness?

All of us should exercise ourselves toward conduct that honors God because it is profitable to do so.

Spiritual fitness is promising.

Spiritual fitness is the best kind of investment. Most investments either pay now or later, not both. Spiritual fitness pays now *and* later.

Spiritual fitness is promising now.

What promises are given to those who live godly lives?

negative: You ll avoid many problems

- You will never get drunk or be an alcoholic
- You will never use illegal drugs
- You will never cheat at school, on taxes, on wife, etc.

positive: You ll do right by:

- pleasing God
- pleasing your family
- pleasing the state by being a good citizen
- pleasing your employer by being a good worker
- pleasing your church by working, tithing, praying, and being faithful

Spiritual fitness has a promise of life to come.

Spiritual fitness pays eternal dividends. Can the same be said of physical fitness? No. We will be paid back for our efforts.

Matthew 6:20: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.



Conclusion

Every Christian ought to strive for spiritual fitness because doing so is profitable for the present and promising for your future. Physical exercise is good, but spiritual exercise is better.

How much time have you been spending in “God’s Gym” lately? You’ll never develop any spiritual strength until you begin exercising yourself toward godliness. Paul is calling believers to a life of discipline, labor, and commitment. No discipline, no discipleship; no sweat, no sainthood.

For Further Discussion:

1. Is Paul saying that physical exercise has no value?

No, it has “a little” value, i.e., little in comparison with spiritual exercise/discipline.

2. Should we be more concerned about our physical appearance or our spiritual condition? Why?

More time and effort should go into our spiritual well-being than into our physical appearance because it’s more important, valuable, and lasting.

