

The Power of Godly Living:

How to Train for Eternal Impact

Let's begin in **1 Timothy 4:8–10**:

"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. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. 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."

Now I like that: *"to this end we both labor and suffer."* Those two things seem to go hand in hand in ministry. Any true work of God is going to be met with some opposition. There are going to be hurdles to overcome.

Posted signs sometimes say: "I used to be afraid of hurdles. Then I got over it." That's important to remember. Hurdles are meant to be jumped over. They aren't there to stop us; they're there to lift us higher. Maybe you've got a hurdle in your life this morning—something blocking your path. God's saying, "Come on. With My help, we can get over this thing."

In Greek culture, athletic ability was held in high esteem—just like it is today. Paul tells Timothy, "bodily exercise profits a little." Now, he wasn't saying we shouldn't take care of ourselves. It's just a matter of priorities.

You can work out and develop your body, but you begin to lose it if you stop for a bit. It's disappointing, isn't it? But spiritual strength doesn't fade like that. It builds. It lasts.

Paul is saying that godliness is profitable for all things, not just some things. It benefits the whole person, body, soul, and spirit, not just in this life but in the future. That's an incredible quality to possess.

Paul's challenge to Timothy, this young minister, is to pursue godliness with the same athlete's dedication to his sport. The weight room is fine, but the prayer room is better. Physical strength fades, but spiritual strength? It grows stronger. And it doesn't just benefit you for today. It carries into eternity.

To This End: We Labor and Suffer

We labor, and we suffer. In Greek, the word "labor" means to work to the point of weariness. And "suffer" means to agonize in a struggle. Put that together: we work until we're weary, often under pressure, often in pain because we understand the eternal reward.

We do this willingly because we know there's a gospel to preach, souls that hang in the balance, a heaven to gain, and a hell to shun.

Nobody with a clear understanding of the glories of heaven and the horrors of hell can remain casual in their service to God unless their heart is completely cold and calloused.

We sang a lot of songs this morning about fire. We ought to have passion for serving the Lord and serving others. That's what ministry is all about.

Jesus said the harvest is ready—but the workers are few. The field is ripe. The only thing lacking is people willing to go and gather it in. All it takes is someone led by the Spirit.

Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15:

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

Get pumped up about this work! The Word of God is not just your lunch box; it's your toolbox. Everything you need to fulfill God's calling is right here in the Book. He's equipped you. It completes and empowers you for every good work.

So whatever God has called you to do, do it wholeheartedly. Even if it's just filling water pots, like at that wedding in Cana, fill them to the brim! Do it with excellence, for the Lord.

And you can't do it in your own strength. It has to be by His Spirit. Not by might, not by power, but by the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God will do the work of God in us and through us.

The Yoke and the Cross: Symbols of Our Commitment

We know the cross is the great symbol of Christianity. It reminds us of all Jesus suffered for us. But Jesus also gave us another symbol: the yoke.

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Yokes aren't flashy. They're not on church logos or hanging on chains around our necks. But maybe they should be.

Paul Powell once said in *The Complete Disciple*:

"The cross is an instrument of death. The yoke is an implement of toil. The cross symbolizes sacrifice. The yoke symbolizes service. The cross suggests blood. The yoke suggests sweat."

I had this mental picture, so I took a piece of paper and drew a cross, and in the horizontal beam, I drew a yoke because both symbols represent our commitment to Christ.

"To this end, we both labor (the yoke) and suffer (the cross)." Serving God takes sweat and blood. But we're not doing it alone. We're yoked to Jesus. He's walking beside us, working with us.

2 Corinthians 4:16-17 says:

"We do not lose heart... our light affliction... is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Even our afflictions are working for us. We don't always feel that way in the moment, but they are. So Paul says, "Rejoice in tough times." Why? Because God is working in you. He's shaping you, stretching you, growing you. And it's worth it.

What Qualifies You? The Call and the Power

Here's a good question: what qualifies you to work for God?

The answer's simple: **The call of God.**

That's it. Moses wasn't qualified in the world's eyes. Neither were the disciples. They weren't rabbis or scholars. They had no Bible degrees. But Jesus called them, and that made them qualified.

He looked at His ragtag team of disciples, guys who often misunderstood Him, got it wrong, and argued with each other, and He said, "Perfect." Because it's not about your qualifications. It's about His call and His power.

1 Corinthians 1:28 reminds us:

"God has chosen the things which are not to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence."

We try to serve sometimes in our own strength, and it doesn't work. It's like using a chainsaw without starting it. You sweat and struggle but make no progress. What's the problem?

"What's *that*?"

Power.

That's what we're missing when we don't rely on the Holy Ghost.

We need to plug into the power every day. Get up and say, "Holy Spirit, help me today. Guide me, strengthen me. I need your anointing—not just on Sunday, but every day."

If He's not working in your life, it's hard for Him to work through your life. So lean on Him daily. Let Him empower you.

And know this: there's a **payday coming**. Revelation 22:12:

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work."

Yes, heaven is enough. But Jesus says He's bringing rewards. Prizes. And nothing done in His name will ever be in vain. Not even a cup of cold water.

So give it your all, whether it's in the pulpit or your secular job. Your boss isn't your boss; God is. And He will take care of you.

As co-laborers with Christ, we can rest in this: **Payday is coming**.

