

The Road to Spiritual Growth (Progress)

1 Timothy 4:7,8

Introduction:

- How is spiritual progress measured?
 1. Many people wrongly measure spirituality by religious a_____ (e.g. going to church, giving, witnessing, etc.)
 2. Satan works to d_____ believers into thinking they are spiritually progressing when they are actually stagnant.
- 1 Tim 4:7,8 gives two roads to spirituality:
 1. One is the w_____ road, leading to spiritual stagnation.
 2. The other is the r_____ road, leading to spiritual progress.

The road of b_____ discipline – starts with doing/thinking

- False teachers were spreading worldly m_____ (v. 7a) which were lessons on depriving the b_____ in some way as a means of spirituality (v. 8b)
 1. The contrast of verse 7 is of worldly myths and godliness.
 2. The contrast of verse 8 is of bodily discipline and godliness.
 3. Putting it together:
 - a. Verse 7 - Don't listen to worldly myths about bodily discipline, but instead focus on godliness
 - b. Verse 8 – Why? - because bodily discipline profits little but godliness profits in every way.
- In Paul's day two prominent groups emphasized bodily discipline as a means of spirituality.
 1. Gnostics – example found in Col 2:20-23; they had rules such as *do not handle, do not t_____, do not touch.*
 2. Judaism – example of fasting t_____ per week (Lk 18:12)
- Christianity today
 1. Many wrongly make fasting as a way to draw closer to God.
 - a. Matt 6:16-18 is the only teaching on fasting. Jesus commands that fasting be done in s_____.
 - b. There is _____ biblical command to practice fasting.
 - c. There are several passages recording people fasting as a response to a crisis (Esther 4:15,16; Acts 14:23).
 2. Many wrongly separate the physical from the spiritual
 - a. *I can do anything to my body and it does not affect me spiritually*

- b. The Bible shows that the physical and spiritual are interconnected – Adam & Eve’s sin affected
 - 1) Their spirit - they h_____ from God
 - 2) Their soul (mind, will, emotions)- they were a_____
 - 3) Their body – it became m_____

●Beware of starting with the psychological or physical as a means to spirituality.

The road of g_____ discipline – *starts with our connection to God and results in right thinking and doing*

●Definition of godliness

1. Literal definition - g_____ worship
2. Practical definition – those actions and attitudes that arise from a r_____ connection to God.

●Godliness is profitable for _____ things (v. 8)

1. Holds promise for the p_____ life on earth
 - a. Godliness is a lifestyle of faith or t_____ in God and results in a better life on earth.
 - 1) Trust starts with your connection to God and positively affects your s_____ (mind, will, emotions) and your b_____ (actions).
 - 2) This results in spiritual p_____

b. Practical examples

- 1) Godliness in marriage
 - a) Husbands are to love their wives un_____ as Christ loved the church (Eph 5:25)
 - b) This is being God-c_____ as opposed to self-centered and holds promise for a better marriage.
 - c) This results in spiritual progress.
- 2) Godliness in relating to your fellow Christians
 - a) We are to love our fellow-Christian unselfishly as C_____ loved us (Jn 15:12)
 - b) If we start with our p_____ we will never leave our comfort zone and fellowship with others will suffer (e.g. giving comfort – 2 Cor 1:4)
 - c) Godliness is profitable when loving my brother or sister in Christ, holding promise for stronger relationships.

- d) This results in spiritual progress.
2. Holds promise for the f_____ life with God once Jesus returns – it impacts eternity!
 - a. Godliness h_____ on the day that Jesus Christ returns (2 Pet 3:11,12)
 - 1) The devil wants to l_____ the time between now and Jesus’s return by luring us into ungodliness (remember Rev 12:12,17)
 - 2) When we live godly, it holds promise for the future – it brings Christ’s coming closer.
 - b. Godliness will be r_____ when Jesus returns (Rev 22:12)
 - 1) 1 Cor 3:10-15 – the judgment of every believers earthly works will only r_____ the good works, which will be rewarded.
 - 2) Other scriptures supporting this – Lk 6:22,23; Lk 6:35; Col 3:24,25
 - 3) When we live godly, it holds promise for the future – we will be rewarded.
 - c. Godliness brings others to faith in Christ
 - 1) D_____ impact (Matt 5:16) – the metaphor of light where they **see** your good works and glorify God.
 - 2) I_____ impact (1 Cor 3:6) – the metaphor of farming where your good works are used in a **process** (planting and watering) of bringing people to Christ.
 - 3) C_____ impact – as we give financially to mission activities, God uses this to bring people to faith.

Conclusion:

- If you start in the wrong place you will be spiritually stagnant
 1. The wrong road – you focus on certain thinking or actions in order to be godly.
 2. Satan’s trick – *going to church, reading the Bible, witnessing, etc. makes me godly.*
- If you start in the right place you will progress spiritually
 1. The right road – focus on your right relationship (connection) with God and let your thinking and actions flow from it.
 2. Because I am godly (trusting God), I do those good works.