


Be Ready

2025-08-24 - 1 Timothy 4

	<p>The church at Ephesus was facing a growing crisis as the Gospel was being assaulted by false teachers inside and outside the church. Paul's letter to Timothy gives a clear picture of how to respond to such teachings in the short and long run. Come join us Sunday as we learn from Paul's challenges how we can be ready to endure faithfully until Jesus returns.</p>
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Good morning, church. I am super excited to be in front of you all today. I have been given the assignments and the responsibility to bring God's word to y'all, and I'm super, super, super excited. Our lesson today, Paul uses the imagery of athletics, and when you think about athletes, especially professional athletes, they can't afford to be careless or unprepared. They train, they watch, they discipline themselves. And because when the moment comes, they need to respond without hesitation. And Scripture reminds us that the Christian life is not different. We are called to live with the same kind of alertness and focus.

Will you stand ready?

That's why the question I want to ask you today is, *"Will you stand ready?" "Will you stand ready?"* The Christian life requires warning, training, and enduring, endurance. It's not something we just drift through or take lightly. It requires consistency and intentionality. That means we have to be ready at all times, ready to guard against false teaching, ready to pursue godliness, and ready to persevere through trials. Every generation will face its own battles and challenges, but the question is always the same: *"Will God's people stay faithful?"*

In our study today, we will see the challenges that Timothy faced. These challenges came in the form of false teachers, cultural pressure, and the weight of leading as a young minister. So for us today, the same issues do exist, but they might look a little different, but overall they're the same. We have many more distractions. We have false teachers who are leading people away from Christ, and on top of that, we live in a society and a culture where it pushes us to value everything but Christ. And this danger is real. And Paul knew about it back in the day, and it's real today.

That's why Paul writes with urgency, reminding Timothy and reminding us that our faith in our ministry does not survive on autopilot. It takes training, focus, and endurance. Athletes train because strength doesn't appear by accident; marathoners finish because they refuse to quit at mile 20. It spiritually is the same, and Paul gives us a straight path in *1 Timothy 4:1-16*, and that is going to be the passage I'm going to be talking about, and I'm super excited.

But let's pray and ask God to bless this lesson.

Lord, you are good. You are kind. Lord, there is no one like you. You are wholly set apart. So thank you for your grace and your mercy that is new every single day. But I pray that you will give me the wisdom and the knowledge to be able to teach this lesson faithfully. May all these words be yours and not mine. And guard my mouth, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.

So the book of *1 Timothy* is a letter from the apostle to his young ministry partner Timothy, who was leading in the city of Ephesus. Ephesus was a city that was filled with idol worship and competing philosophies. So it's safe to say that there was deep confusion in this city at this time. The local church Timothy was leading faced a problem, and it's a serious problem. There were false teachers who were spreading ideas that distracted from the gospel. And I want to mention that these teachers were part of the church. They were members of the body of Christ, and so these were not some random dudes outside in the streets who were giving information about the Lord. These were people who were in the church, and these false teachers promoted and distorted the word of God. They twisted the meaning of the *Torah* and they invented ideas that did not match the teaching of Christ or his apostles, and this caused division within the church.

And so in this book, Paul points out that division itself is the evidence that their teaching is false, because when genuine Christian teaching is faithful to the way of Jesus, it results in love and faithful service, not division. So Paul reminds Timothy that the true purpose of the word of God, of the *Torah*, is not to fuel mere speculation, but is to expose the reality of the human's heart condition. That when you read the word of God right, it points people to the grace of God that was revealed in the Messiah, that he came to save sinful, broken, and rebellious people.

So Paul's goal in writing this letter was to encourage Timothy to guide him in restoring order in the church, and to show that sound doctrine and personal godliness are essential for guarding the church from error. So this morning's lesson will follow the very pattern that Paul lays out in chapter 4 because when you study this book, when you study this passage, you will notice that there are three major calls for believers.

Will You Stand Ready?

Warning – Reject False Teaching (vv. 1-7a)

Recognize and stand against spiritual deception.

Number one, there is a warning: reject false teaching. We will see this in verses 1 through 7, *recognize and stand against spiritual deception.*

Number two, there's a training: pursue godliness, and we see that in verses 7 through 10, he says, *"Fill your life with practices that lead to Christlikeness."*

Number three there is enduring: persevere in the mission, and we see this in verses 11 through 16, he says, *"Keep going even when it's hard for the sake of the gospel."*

And I believe these three movements—warning, training, and enduring—are not just instructions for Timothy in the 1st century. They are the ongoing pattern for Christians today. They show us how to guard the truth. They show us how to grow in godliness, and they show us how to keep the faith until the end.

4 Now the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons, ²through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared. ³They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods that God created to be received with gratitude by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵since it is sanctified by the word of God and by prayer. ⁶If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished by the words of the faith and the good teaching that you have followed. ⁷But have nothing to do with pointless and silly myths.

1 Timothy 4:1-7 CSB

So let's read the word of God, verses 1 through 7. It says, *"Now the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons, through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared. They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods that God created to be received with gratitude by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, since it is sanctified by the word of God and by prayer. If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished by the words of the faith and the good teaching that you have followed. But,"* Paul says, *"But, Timothy, have nothing to do with pointless and silly myths."*

Will You Stand Ready?

Warning – Reject False Teaching (vv. 1-7a)

Recognize and stand against spiritual deception.

Paul begins this message with a sober warning for Timothy about what lies ahead for the church. Paul says that in the last days, some will depart from the faith. When he says *"depart,"* he means they will fall away. They will turn aside. They will stand apart from the truth. It is where we get the word *apostasy*. *Apostasy* is when someone abandons the true faith, not simply because they're struggling in faith, but that they are actively turning away from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Spirit made it clear that in the last days, there will be people inside the church who once seemed to believe, but they will turn away from the faith.

I had a friend at Moody's where we would be together in chapel worshipping or on Sunday mornings attending church together. We'd be standing side by side or sometimes even on our knees, crying out to the Lord. To me, this person seemed fully committed. They were living out their faith with passion and purpose. But sadly, that person turned away from the Lord. I don't know what exactly they turned to, but their life looks completely different. It's like day and night. And it's hard to watch. It's a sober reminder that faith can be abandoned, and there are people who will abandon the faith. Have you seen someone in your life like that? Someone who once seemed to be fully devoted to the Lord, and now they've turned away? If you have, you know it's hard to watch. It is heartbreaking because we know that they are walking away from their Redeemer.

Seeing someone turn away like this reminds us that Paul's warning is not just theoretical, but it's real and it's urgent and it happens. So Paul wants Timothy to know and understand that these people, they don't just simply drift away, they turn toward something else. They begin to listen to deceitful spirits and follow the teachings of demons. False teaching is not morally neutral. It has a spiritual source, just as God speaks through his word to his people, and through his Holy Spirit. We got to know that Satan and his little demons, they spread lies to pull people away from Christ.

Jesus himself described Satan as a liar and the father of lies. That same strategy began all the way in the garden when the serpent came and slithered and asked Eve, *"Did God really say you can't eat any of the trees?"* You know that that's not what God said. He said, *"You can eat from all the trees, but just this one."* The devil's tactics haven't changed. He still twists God's word, he plants doubts, and he substitutes falsehood for the truth. And we know that. And these doctrines of demons come through. Paul says, ***the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared***. These false teachers are dangerous because they look religious. They look persuasive, but they live in hypocrisy. Their consciences, meant to be God's alarm system inside of us, are seared, burned to the point of no more feeling. They can lie, they can deceive, they can manipulate without feeling any sense of guilt or conviction. What a dangerous place to be.

They may sound spiritual, but their teaching does not come from the Holy Spirit, but instead they have become the mouthpieces of the enemy. And we have to watch out for these people. So to make sure Timothy recognizes this and sees this, Paul calls it how it is. He gives him an example of what this deception would look like. And when I looked at it, I was like, *"Man, this kind of looks like my time right now,"* because it says ***they forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods that***

God created to be received with gratitude by those who believe and know the truth. This is a form of legalism, adding man-made rules to God's word and presenting them as the path to holiness. How foolishness!

Instead of focusing on salvation by grace through faith in Jesus alone, these false teachers insist on superficial rules: forbidding marriage—I feel bad for them—restricting diets. *“No, no Chick-fil-A on Monday mornings. I love Chick-fil-A.”* And they claim that these practices make someone closer to God. Notice what is happening here. *Apostasy* is not only about leaving Christ, but it's also about replacing Christ with something else—other authorities, other rituals, or other paths to God. That's why Paul is so urgent, because to depart from the gospel is to desert the only source of salvation and life. And Paul says in Galatians 1:8 *“Even if we or an angel from heaven should come and preach a gospel that is contrary to what we have already told you, a curse be on him.”* This is not a game to play about; this is real life. The danger for Timothy and for us is that these false teachings don't always come in the form of obvious heresy. They often look like a stricter, more disciplined, more spiritual-sounding way to live. But the word of God shows us that behind this deception, false teachers and their messed-up doctrines distract us from Christ, and it distorts God's truth. Legalism might look holy, but it actually denies the sufficiency of Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross. *Apostasy* doesn't always look like rebellion, but sometimes it looks like a religion without Christ at the center.

So Paul's warning to Timothy is clear. He says, *“Don't be naïve about false teaching. It is real. It is spiritual, and it will tempt some people to walk away from their faith.”* So Timothy had to recognize, he has to stand firm against it, and he has to keep himself grounded in the sound teaching of our Lord Jesus. And Paul's call to Timothy, I believe, is God's call to us today, we are surrounded by some voices that sound spiritual, but they lead away from Christ. We live in a world filled with competing voices, seductive messages, and spiritual counterfeits.

So how do we recognize deception when it comes? How do we recognize deception when it's in our house? The key discernment through God's word. Just like a banker learns to recognize counterfeit by studying and handling the real money—right, smelling it, maybe, I don't know—we recognize false teaching by immersing ourselves in Scripture. The more we know what God has actually said, the easier it is to spot when somebody says something crazy.

So, church, recognizing deception is only the first step. But we also have to recognize that we have to cling to Christ and put him in the center of our life. We must reject false teaching. False teaching always either adds to the gospel or takes away from the gospel. But the true gospel reminds us that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone, which means that he is enough.

So we have to recognize deception, but that's only the first step. It's not enough to know what is false. We must also know how to live in what is true.

Will You Stand Ready?

Warning – Reject False Teaching (vv. 1-7a)

Recognize and stand against spiritual deception.

Training – Pursue Godliness (vv 7b-10)

Fill your life with practices that lead to Christlikeness.

Paul doesn't just warn Timothy about false teaching; he immediately points him toward the positive pursuit of godliness. Yes, avoiding lies keeps us safe, but training in godliness makes us strong. Just like an athlete who doesn't win simply by avoiding mistakes, but by disciplined training, the Christian life requires intentional effort. That's why Paul says, *"Train yourself in godliness."*

Rather, train yourself in godliness. ⁸For the training of the body has limited benefit, but godliness is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. ⁹This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance. ¹⁰For this reason we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. ¹¹Command and teach these things. ¹²Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.

1 Timothy 4:7-12 CSB

Which leads me to my second point. Look at verses 7 through 12: ***"But have nothing to do with pointless and silly myths. Rather, train yourself in godliness. For the training of the body has limited benefit, but godliness is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance. For this reason, we labor and we strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity."***

Yeah, I love that Paul says, *"Train yourself in godliness,"* because the word *train* comes from the same Greek root word, *gymnasia*, and so he is drawing from the imagery of athletics. Just as an athlete prepares with discipline, sacrifice, and hard work, so the Christian must devote themselves to godliness. Just as an athlete trains for lasting performance, Paul challenges Timothy and us not to settle for a shallow kind of strength, but to train ourselves in godliness because godliness produces a strength that will last forever.

Physical training has value, true, but it's temporary. You can work out, you can eat right, strengthen your body, you can get buff, right? But that age will creep up on you. Your body will

fade. Godliness, however, brings benefits that last both now and for eternity. It is a strength that never fades. That's why Paul emphasizes, ***"This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance,"*** and in other words, pursuing godliness is not optional or secondary. It is a rock-solid truth, a foundation you can build your life on now and for eternity.

You might be asking, *"Why is godliness worth such effort?"* Good question, Felix. Paul explains in verse 10: ***"For this reason we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God."*** Our training is not wasted; it is fueled by hope. The God we serve is not dead; he is alive. He is our Savior, he is our Redeemer, and he is the reason why we can keep moving forward when life is hard. And Paul makes it even clearer: ***"He is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe."*** God's grace extends to the world, but those who trust in Jesus get to experience his fullness. That's why we discipline ourselves in godliness—not for self-improvement alone, but because our eyes are fixed on the living God and our hearts are anchored in the hope of eternal life.

Church I want to ask you, show me your hands: how many of you have experienced the love of Christ? A lot of us, great. How many of you have felt the hope and the relief that comes from knowing that you are saved? Oh my goodness, me. We have also felt that comfort in our spirit, the assurance that the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the King, the Creator of the universe, has our back. When the world seems ugly and disgusting, we know that he is seated at the throne, and everything will be good, and we have peace. That right there is the real experience of God's grace. Our training in godliness is not just about improving ourselves; it's about living in the power of Christ. It's about living in Christ's love and pressing forward and knowing that the living God is at work in us and through us.

And Paul then speaks directly to Timothy as a young leader. Now I gotta be honest, when I first read the book of Timothy, I thought Timothy was in his teens. Or, I thought at least he was in his 20s. So you can imagine my surprise when I found out that this man was, like, in his 30s, 40s, maybe 50s at the time Paul sent this letter. But he was young in comparison to Paul and likely to many in the congregation. But Paul encourages Timothy in verse 12: ***"Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity."***

I love Paul's solution to Timothy about being young because he does not tell Timothy, *"Hey, if you want to gain respect, you better go fight for it with arguments. You better make somebody feel small about themselves."* Instead, he tells him to earn respect through godliness. *"Set an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity."* Timothy's authority will not rest on his age, but on the visible fruit of godliness in his life. I love this verse because when I read it, I think about our youth. Some of them are in here because it reminds me that in God's kingdom, being young

is not a weakness, but it's an opportunity. It's an opportunity to lead others, to inspire the faith of the older generation, to show the reality of Christ in everything we do.

And that's why we have chosen *1 Timothy 4:12* as the foundation for our youth group's new name and logo.



It's more than just words on a design. It's a call to live our godliness visibly, boldly, and faithfully right now—not tomorrow, not a couple of years from now, not once you're out of high school, but right now. It will be our identity. It will remind us that no matter how young we are, we can lead by example. We can show the reality of Christ in the way we speak, in the way we love, in the way we live, in the way we trust God, and in the way we pursue purity. Our name is a declaration that we will not be defined by the world's low expectations for the youth, but we will be defined by God's calling to godliness.

This is the kind of vision Paul gives to Timothy, and this is the vision we are embracing as a youth group. Paul reminds Timothy, and reminds me, that respect does not come from age. It comes from godly examples. Sometimes I'm like, *"Man, I'm a young pastor. I'm about to be 25 next year. I'm like, I'm a young pastor. Does my word even matter? Like, I'm just tripping, I know. Like, does it matter? Like, what can I teach these people? They've done life, right?"* Like, I get scared. But this encourages me because whatever your age, wherever you are, this is a call for everyone. *"Don't let anyone look down on you."* There is always someone older than you, but that should not discourage you. God calls each of us to live faithfully, to be an example, and to step boldly into the work that he has given us.

Pursuing godliness shapes our view of God. It's like approaching a towering mountain. From far away, the mountain seems manageable, and it seems small, but as you draw closer, you begin to better understand its true size and its majesty. In the same way, the closer we draw to God, the more we start to understand his goodness. We become increasingly in awe with his glory and his *kavod* (Hebrew for *glory*), and how truly great he is. That's why Paul calls us to train in godliness. It is not a one-time achievement; it is a lifelong pursuit. You will never arrive while you're still here. But the more you grow in Christ, the more you realize how much greater he truly is, and the more you realize how much you need him.

So the pursuit of godliness is not only about drawing closer to God; it also prepares us for the mission that he has given us. As we reject false teaching and as we grow in godliness, our lives become a visible example of Christ's power and glory, equipping us to face the challenges of ministry and service. Because godliness is not enough if we give up when the work is difficult, if we give up when the opposition is strong, or when the path feels long.

Will You Stand Ready?

Warning – Reject False Teaching (vv. 1-7a)

Recognize and stand against spiritual deception.

Training – Pursue Godliness (vv 7b-10)

Fill your life with practices that lead to Christlikeness.

Enduring – Persevere in the Mission (11-16)

Keep going, even when it's hard, for the sake of the gospel.

That's why Paul emphasizes endurance and perseverance in the mission, which takes me to my last point: enduring: persevere in the mission, *"Keep going, even when it's hard, for the sake of the gospel."*

¹¹ Command and teach these things. ¹² Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. ¹³ Until I come, give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching. ¹⁴ Don't neglect the gift that is in you; it was given to you through prophecy, with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. ¹⁵ Practice these things; be committed to them, so that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶ Pay close attention to your life and your teaching; persevere in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1 Timothy 4:11-16 CSB

Look at verses 11 through 16: ***"Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. Until I come, give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching. Don't neglect the gift that is in you; it was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Practice these things, be committed to them, so that your progress may be evident to all. Pay close attention to your life and your teaching. Persevere in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers."***

If rejecting false teachings is how we guard the truth, and training in godliness is how we grow strong in the truth, then endurance is how we finish with the truth. This is where Paul takes Timothy in the last section of the chapter. He has warned him, he has told him to train, and now he is urging him to persevere. And here is the key: endurance is not possible without the first two. You cannot persevere in the mission of Christ unless you have rejected what is false and filled your life with what is true.

Paul tells Timothy in verse 13: ***“Until I come, give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching.”*** This is a charge to remain anchored in the word of God. Timothy is not to build his ministry on creativity or charisma or clever arguments, but on Scripture alone. The word of God must be read publicly, explained faithfully, and applied clearly. But sadly, there are many churches and many people today, this morning, who will abandon Scripture for stories, for entertainment, or shallow inspirational speeches and pep talks. Those churches and those people will not endure. They may gain crowds, but they will lose Christ. True endurance lasts when the word of God is at the center of every single thing. The church and its people will endure when the word of God is above their life.

Paul also commands Timothy not to neglect the spiritual gift that God has given him. This means that endurance requires stewardship. God equips every believer with spiritual gifts for the building up of the body. But they do not grow strong by neglect. They grow strong by use. Endurance is not passive; it demands that you take what God has entrusted you with and labor with them faithfully for his kingdom.

Church, I believe I have been given the gift of teaching, and I love talking about God. I love seeing somebody when I explain something to them, and their eyes just light up. I love that part, but I am terrified to be up here right now. To be honest, I am. But I cannot neglect the gift that the Lord has given me. The only way I can be better is if I keep using it. And neglecting a gift is a waste of a gift, and a wasted gift weakens the mission of the church.

And Paul presses even further. He says, ***“Practice these things, be committed to them, so that your progress may be evident to all.”*** I found out that endurance is not about a moment of passion, but it’s a lifetime of progress. The Christian life is not measured by a flash of zeal, but by steady faithfulness over the years. Progress marks perseverance. This means others should be able to see the growth in us over time—in how we love, in how we care for other people, in how we tame our tongues, right, and how wise we are, and how holy we are. And so endurance is visible. It leaves a testimony that encourages others to remain faithful to the Lord.

Finally, Paul gives Timothy another reminder: ***“Pay close attention to your life and your teaching. Persevere in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.”*** Here, endurance is shown not only to be personal but also communal. The stakes are high. The stakes are eternal, because if Timothy gives up, if he drifts from the word, if he ceases to persevere, it not only affects his soul but also the souls that he has been entrusted with. And the same is true for us. Your endurance is not just about you; it’s about the people that God has placed in your life. There are people watching your example, listening to your words, and following your lead.

You got your wife, you got your husband, you got your kids, you got your grandkids, you got your siblings. Endurance protects both your faith and the faith of others.

And here is Paul's main focus in this passage, I believe. He says, because we reject false teaching, we protect the truth; because we train ourselves in godliness, we grow strong in the faith; and because of these things, because we reject false teaching, because we train ourselves, we are equipped to endure in the mission of Christ until the end. Endurance is not something we stumble into. It is the fruit of discernment and discipline. The Christian who endures is the Christian who has stood against deception, pursued godliness, and has fixed their hope on the living God. A Christian who endures and follows Paul's instructions will be ready.

So, church, we cannot coast on our faith. I hope you're hearing that. We cannot coast on our faith. We cannot live on autopilot. We must be ready. We must be ready because to follow Jesus means to notice the warnings. To follow Jesus means to train in godliness. To follow Jesus means to press on with endurance. This is the way to guard the truth. This is the way to grow in Christ, and this is the way to keep the faith until the end. And this is how we stay ready, church.

Let's pray. "Lord God, thank you. Thank you for giving us your word that warns us, that changes us, that helps us persevere until the end. Lord, may we root out false teachers among ourselves, and Lord, may we embrace the truth. Thank you for your grace. Thank you for your kindness. Lord, may we be ready, in Jesus' name. Amen."



Digging Deeper – **Be Ready** – 1 Timothy 4

1. What stood out to you from the sermon?

Read 1 Timothy 4

2. As you read through these verses, what stands out to you?
3. What types of false teachers or teachings are you exposed to on a regular basis?
4. What type of false teachers or teachings are you exposed to from those claiming to be Christians? (Note, the first question is broad, the second question is specifically about places you might encounter false teachings from those who profess Christ)
5. What are Paul's warning signs about those who depart from the faith?
6. What should we do in response when we see warning signs and others departing from the faith?
7. Have you ever had to do that with someone? How did it go?
8. What do you think of when Paul talks about training in godliness? What do you think it looks like to do this?
9. Are you trained up in goodness in a way in which you could run a marathon? Or would you pass out after half a mile?
10. When Paul talks to Timothy about commanding and teaching, is this for everyone to do? Why or why not?
11. Timothy is most likely in his 40s when this letter is written (Pastor Matt would argue he is closer to 50...). When you read Paul telling him "Do not let anyone despise your youth..." how does it change the meaning for you knowing Timothy's age? How does it change how you might need to think about how you walk before others?
12. What does it look like for you to endure and persevere as the final verses of this passage mention?
13. Take some time to end in prayer by sharing prayer requests and praying for one another.