



Trying vs Training

By Jeff Bedwell on August 18, 2022

TODAY'S READING: 1 Timothy 4

There is a huge difference between trying to do something and training to do something. You may be inspired by a great musical or athletic performance you just observed, but even if you have great natural talents and giftedness, you will not be able to come near to duplicating the performance without years of training.

This need for training is not confined only to athletes or musicians. Indeed, it is required for any significant challenge in life — including spiritual growth. Paul wrote to Timothy, *“Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come”* (1 Timothy 4:7–8, ESV).

Sometimes we end up discouraged and defeated in following Jesus because we convince ourselves that the only thing we need to do is “try harder.” Have you ever tried harder to be patient? How did that work out for you?

Spiritual transformation is not just a matter of trying harder, but of training wisely! Paul compared it to an athlete in training, *“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever”* (1 Corinthians 9:25, NIV84).

Trying hard can accomplish only so much. If you are serious about fulfilling your God-given potential in any area of life, you will have to enter into a life of training. You must arrange your life around certain practices that will enable you to do what you cannot do now by willpower alone. You must train, not merely try.

Dallas Willard describes spiritual disciplines as: “activities in our power that we engage in to enable us to do what we cannot do by direct effort.” These practices open us more fully to the transforming work of God’s grace to be spiritually formed so we become more and more like Christ and increasingly involved in God’s kingdom and design.

One way of looking at spiritual habits or disciplines is by categories:

- Inward Disciplines: Meditation, Prayer, Fasting, Study.
- Outward Disciplines: Simplicity, Solitude, Submission, Service.
- Corporate Disciplines: Confession, Worship, Guidance, Celebration.

Do not be overwhelmed by this list! Ask God to guide you in where to begin. Training in any area begins small and simply and grows from there. Start with what you can do, not what you

cannot do. Ask God to help you train yourself for godliness – for life at its best – life as God intended it to be. As you continue to train, trusting in God’s grace to meet you there, you will be amazed at what God will do in you and through you that you could never do on your own by merely trying harder.

PRAYER: Father, thank You that Your grace not only saves me, but sustains me and transforms me. Help me begin, renew or deepen my practice of spiritual growth habits to open myself up more fully to the transforming work of Your amazing grace working in me through the Holy Spirit. Teach me to train not just try.

TOMORROW'S READING: 1 Timothy 5

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