

Training vs Trying Scripture

Though Paul wrote this passage with Timothy to the church in Colosse, this passage has been preserved to have the same impact on us as it did on the first hearers. I am going to begin with reading a few verses as a background to today's scriptural text.

³ We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God's people, ⁵ which come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven. You have had this expectation ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News.

⁶ This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace.

⁷ You learned about the Good News from Epaphras, our beloved co-worker. He is Christ's faithful servant, and he is helping us on your behalf. ⁸ He has told us about the love for others that the Holy Spirit has given you.

Colossians 1: 3 – 8 NLT

Paul writes this Good News is bearing fruit everywhere. Do you feel excited to hear what Paul and Timothy write next? Let's stand if you are able and read today's text together.

Congregational Reading:

⁹ So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. ¹⁰ Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.

¹¹ We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, ¹² always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

Colossians 1: 9 – 14 NLT

Training VS Trying Sermon

I. Introduction

Before I start I want to recognize that today is Mother's Day. Congratulations to all of you mothers out there for a difficult job well done. One internet source says that today there will be about 85 million American moms celebrating Mother's Day. Now, there was not always a Mother's Day. In 1905 a West Virginia woman named, Anna Jarvis, began to push for a Mother's Day holiday. Three years later in 1908 Congress voted against making it a national holiday. After Congress rejected the holiday Anna went to the states. West Virginia became the first to celebrate Mother's Day and by 1911 every state was observing Mother's Day. President Woodrow Wilson decided it was better late than never for the federal government to catch up, so in 1914 Mother's Day was declared a national holiday.

Men let's stand up and give a hand to all the mothers represented here today and some of us have to give a hand to our own mothers who are not here today or have gone on to glory already. Thank you moms for all you do and have done. Our moms would be our first example of what training is about. Everything from potty training, to table manners, and most importantly to learn who Jesus is and what a Christian walk should look like.

Today we want to talk about training to be a follower of Jesus as opposed to trying to be a follower of Jesus.

An example will be very clear to you this morning. Sandeep and Mervin are trained preachers, while I am just trying to preach, you will observe the difference.

At Walter's 101st birthday party I heard Gordon Snyder tell some of the other pastors there that he finds preaching goes easier if he is keeping up on his reading. It just gives him more material and inspiration to draw from. For him it is the training or preparation he needs to get started on a sermon.

Though I am not a trained preacher, trying to get ready for a sermon certainly at least for a week is quiet a good training in reading, meditating, and praying. You know how they say that as long as there are tests in school there will always be prayer in school. I would say the same is true at least for me with

sermon prep. There were a lot of prayers this week that started with the word “help”. I know now you are praying the same thing.

II. Why is training better than trying

My brother, Myron was a soccer coach about ten years for his two daughters when they were growing up, then tennis coach at Hesston College for three years, and most recently the tennis coach for Newton Jr. High. I figured he may have some opinions about the value of training over trying. I asked about training for games not just trying harder at games. He gave me this quote, “Good luck is being prepared when opportunity presents itself”. He went on to say that preparation is the key to success not only on the athletic field but also in the classroom. You can’t just say you want to be a better tennis player unless you begin to train for it. I am sure that Judy did not become the piano player she is today by wishing to be a piano player or trying really hard only on Sunday mornings. No her success would be a combination of some natural abilities, but probably mostly the result of years and years of practicing or training. As important as physical training or educational training is Paul tells Timothy in I Timothy 4: 8, “**Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.**”

Training for godliness or spiritual training is the most important training we can be involved in.

Training vs Trying to be like Jesus

III. Training through Spiritual disciplines:

John Ortberg in his book entitled the Life You’ve Always Wanted goes on to talk about spiritual disciplines.

A. He starts by telling us what they are not.

1. They are not a barometer for spirituality. They are a great tool that may affect our relationship with God, but they do not make us more spiritual just because of how often or vigorously we practice them.
2. Spiritual disciplines are not necessarily unpleasant. We are not a more spiritual person by how abused we look or how hard we work. Spiritual disciplines when done right can be invigorating and encouraging.

3. Finally spiritual disciplines are not a way to earn favor with God. Spiritual disciplines are a way to get closer to the God whose favor we have already received. If you have your Bibles open you can follow along or you can listen as I reread Colossians 1: 4 – 6, ⁴**For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God's people,** ⁵**which come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven.** You have had this expectation ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News.

⁶**This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace.**

B. Spiritual Disciplines are

Disciplines that are spiritual are simply those that help me live in the fruit of the spirit. A Spiritual discipline is any activity that can help me gain power to live life as Jesus taught and modeled it. Following Jesus simply means learning from Him how to arrange my life around activities that enable me to live in the fruit of the Spirit. Let's reread verses 9 – 10 again:

⁹**So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding.** ¹⁰**Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.**

I often want to become better at patience but continually find out that trying harder doesn't work, and getting upset at failures doesn't work. To exhibit the kind of patience I want will come through using spiritual disciplines to grow closer to God, to gain a better understanding of His will. To get from God the spiritual wisdom and understanding I need. Then I will begin to produce the patience I desire. The fruits of the Spirit are not a spiritual discipline, they are the result of growing closer to Jesus through spiritual discipline.

C. The Goal of Spiritual Discipline

A disciplined person is someone who can do the right thing at the right time in the right way with the right spirit. I love this phrase and look forward to the time I start living it. I first remember hearing this from John Ortberg though I don't know if it is original with him. Over time I have forgotten this phrase word for word, because I now quote it as, "Doing the right thing at the right time in the right way for the right reason." Either way it is an inspiring goal.

D. Signs of wise spiritual training

1. Wise training respects the freedom of the Spirit. We need to be careful that in our quest to get a certain amount of Bible reading in, or a certain amount of praying done, that we are so focused on completing the task that we cannot be turned aside by the Spirit to focus on a certain passage. Or have more quiet time in our prayer so we can hear the Spirit speaking to us. The goal needs to be to hear and spend time with the Spirit not just completing our task. Remember the Pharisees were extremely disciplined people and they missed who Jesus is.
2. John Ortberg continues by saying wise training respects our unique temperament and gifts. The training routine that works for someone else may not be the routine that is most effective in your spiritual walk.
3. He also says wise training will take into account our season of life. A new mother may not have the time to read the Bible like she used to, but what an opportunity to train in the area of servanthood. What a thought as we recognize moms on Mother's Day.
4. Wise training respects the inevitability of troughs and peaks. We need to remember the law of rhythm. John says, "We assume that whatever phase is current will last forever. In times of consolation I may mistakenly think that I now have spiritual life mastered. In times of desolation I might assume I must have done something wrong, or perhaps God is punishing me. In truth, both seasons are inevitable, and both seasons can bring unique growth.

5. John concludes with that once we understand the idea of training to be like Jesus, we need to make a clear decision to begin. People don't just drift into a life of training.

There are many spiritual disciplines such as studying the Bible, prayer, fasting, meditating, serving and gathering together like we are here today. One spiritual discipline that John mentioned is getting sufficient sleep. He said that he found out for himself that he did not have the energy to be as loving as he wanted if he was short on sleep. Remember disciplines that are spiritual are simply those that help me live in the fruit of the Spirit. Paul lists the Fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5: 22 – 23, which reads, ”²² **But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** ²³ **gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!**

The fruits of the Spirit are not disciplines we need to practice, but rather a barometer of how well we are opening our lives to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, and not our own spirit. As John the Baptist said when he was talking about Jesus, “I must become less so that He can become greater.”

In Titus 2: 11 – 14 we read, ¹¹ **For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all,** ¹² **training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly,** ¹³ **while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.** ¹⁴ **He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.**

So let us continue to train so that we may be able to more consistently do the right thing in the right way at the right time for the right reason.

Let's pray.