

Healthy Habits for a Lifelong Faith**1. Spiritual Diet 2. Spiritual Exercise 3. Spiritual Example***Introduction*

- My dad's Readers Digest articles; advice/tips/sugg (marriage, health, home); habits – kind of helpful.
- Today in 1 Tim, advice/sugg for life much more helpful, important – not maintaining home, staying healthy, keeping marriage strong – HH for lifelong faith. Esp pertinent on Senior Sun – honor faith of seniors, worship with words/liturgy long ago they grew up with. Not just throwback Sunday (blue hymnal). Day to remember, Christian faith for all ages: youth – seniors; Jesus wants all faith stays strong entire life. So today, we have more than just helpful hints from mag, but rather God gives HH we can cultivate for lifelong faith.

Spiritual Diet

- Still in 1 Tim, letter of Paul to young pastor; all along encouraging Tim to teach correct doctrine exactly way Jesus wants taught. Starts, **vs. 6a (teach correctly)**. Adds, **vs. 6b**. Spiritual nourishment, diet. Re bodies, all know: want healthy lifestyle, good diet. I'm no dietitian; but know: can't have candy bars, fried food, sugary sweets, McDonalds for every meal and call healthy diet. Body needs fruit, veg, protein, everything that makes balanced diet to have healthy lifestyle. What put into body will impact health. Don't get wrong: big fan of double cheese. But you know difference between junk food and healthy food.
- Today Paul, if want lifelong faith, make HH to maintain spiritually healthy diet, **vs. 6b**. Lot of spiritual junk food we take in! Just like junk food through mouth, think junk that comes into body through eyes/ears; think shows watch on TV. I'm not big TV watcher; doesn't matter to me who's dancing with stars, who's got talent. If I turn on TV, almost always appalled by what see. So much sex, filthy language, violence. Easy to say just "entertainment." But think: what are we putting into our bodies? We care about food we eat; what about shows, media, music we put into body. Not saying all TV shows are evil. But as saying goes, "You are what you eat;" also watch, look at.
- So if we want **vs. 6b**, then let's cut this spiritual junk food out of diet, replace with Gospel; eat, nourished on Savior Jesus, bread of life. **"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty... The one who feeds on me will live because of me"** (Jn 6:35, 57). We want to feed on, take Jesus into bodies, not just HC; but we receive bread of life in worship, Bible class, whenever read word of God. That's what's troubling to me about people weeks away from worship, months from Bible class or reading at home. Wouldn't go weeks with eating food; horrible diet, bad for bodies. If want maintain lifelong faith, then need spiritual diet that cuts out junk and feasts on lavish abundance of divine delicacies God sets before us on platter of grace, bread of life, Savior Jesus. This what need to eat (reg., in abund.) in spiritual diet as HH for lifelong faith.

Spiritual Exercise

- Next HH is related to first. Also need spiritual exercise. **Vs. 7b-8ab**. Saying, benefit to physical, bodily exercise, for all ages: young running on playground, recess; students in school active in PE class, athletic events; adults play sports, go running, work out; seniors also encouraged to keep bodies moving, stay healthy, strong. We know, physical activity, bodily exercise important for healthy lifestyle.
- So **vs. 8ab**. In other words, spiritual exercise trumps physical exercise any day, because physique not as imp as faith. Someday your body will die. Unless Jesus returns during lifetime, body will weaken with age, eventually die. What kind of shape body is in, no bearing on eternity. What's important is godliness (**vs. 7b**): means awesome respect for God, leads to (last week) believe and do right thing; means growing in faith & knowledge, and in sanctified Christian living. So **vs. 8b, 8c** (faith carries through life), **8d** (eternal life). So while imp to stay active, keep body in shape, going to gym won't get you to heaven. But exercising godliness, trusting in Savior Jesus for forgiveness of sins and letting his Spirit guide you through life – this spiritual exercise is healthy habit for lifelong faith.

Spiritual Example

- Finally, in life of faith, Paul says make HH to be example to others, to set an example for other Christians. **Vs. 12bc**. Set good example. Should say, remember: Paul, exp pastor writing to young pastor; some things Paul says apply more to pastors.

- Example: **vs. 14**. Means when ordained (installed as pastor for very first time), and other church leaders (presbytery) laid hands (ancient custom for ordination), God gave Tim some special, divine gift. Whatever, if Tim put gift to use in church, that set good example for other believers to use gifts God given to them.
- Another: **vs. 13**. NIV better: **“Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.”** What happens Sunday AM (Mon PM). Lot of things pastors do (mtgs, visits, planning). But most visible, widely recognized activity of pastor is conducting worship service, preaching sermon, teaching Bible class on Sunday AM. Paul tells Tim, that’s what focus on! Set good example for believers by making church services & Bible classes best can be, because that’s when pastor connect with most people at one time. What doing right now. Paul tells Tim, focus on that.
- Something else Paul tells Tim that strikes home for all of us: **vs. 12a**. NIV: **“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young.”** No secret: I’m 32; PDW 29. Youngest two-pastor team in WELS. I came in 09 from Sem; ordained, like Tim, when pastors laid hands on me, and I became pastor. I know beforehand, when church talking about Sem grad, some concerns about age. Same arose in 2012, another Sem grad, got PDW. Concerns just about whether wise for this church, young pastor. Totally understand; legit concerns.
- But, **vs. 12a**, **“don’t let anyone…”** I think: in end, age isn’t that important. When it comes to your pastor, look beyond man, focus on message. Look beyond man: pastors come diff ages, personalities, hobbies, interests, ethnicities, backgrounds, skill sets, everything! So look beyond man, focus on message. Minister of CJ supposed to proclaim CJ, then fade into background. Person’s connection to God or church should never be based on man (whether like, don’t like, too young, too old) but based on message of CJ.
- True: pastors are sinful, sometimes don’t set good example. So when **vs. 12**, tall order; prompts me to apologize. I apologize to everyone here I’ve offended, upset (with words, actions, lack of action); I’m sorry if instead of proclaiming message I’ve gotten in way of message, or if ever executed duties of this office without dignity ministry deserves. **“Be thou an example.”** Where failed, I sincerely apologize. With grateful heart, I praise my Savior Jesus for forgiving my failing. And I thank you that in my time, never seen anyone despise my youth or PDW’s.
- As said before, this section applies especially to pastors, but only? Don’t think so. We all want to cultivate healthy habits that promote lifelong faith. So words apply to us all: **vs. 12b**. When you live your faith, let light shine; when whole life is motivated by Gospel, led by Spirit: bring family to church, lead in prayer, fight temptation, help others, encourage others, support your church, look for opportunities to share Gospel, then setting good example for benefit of others. And when you **vs. 15-16a** (that is to say: when take sin, Savior, service to Lord seriously), then **vs. 16b**.

Conclusion

- That goal, right? To get to heaven and bring as people with as we can. Why we **vs. 10**. We trust in living God, Lord Jesus, who died and lives again, who gives life to people (reason for living here on earth; promise of living with him in heaven). He is Savior of all, and we believe in him! So do you want lifelong faith? Of course; Jesus, too. So maintain spiritual diet & exercise; let life become spiritual example for other believers. Jesus will bless these healthy habits and carry your faith from this life to next.

1 Timothy 4:6-16 (KJV)

⁶If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. ⁷But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. ⁸For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. ⁹This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. ¹⁰For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

¹¹These things command and teach. ¹²Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. ¹³Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. ¹⁴Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

¹⁵Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. ¹⁶Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.