

Unit I: Fulfilling Our Obligations to Neighbors

Physical and Spiritual Fitness

DEVOTIONAL READING: Titus 1:5-9

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Daniel 1:8-20; 1 Corinthians 9:19-27;
1 Timothy 4:7-12; 2 Timothy 2:1-5

PRINT PASSAGES: Daniel 1:8-17; 1 Timothy 4:7-8

KEY VERSES

Refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For 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. (1 Timothy 4:7-8, KJV)

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Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. (1 Timothy 4:7-8, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Trace the interdependence of physical and spiritual health across life stages.
- Honor the body as an expression of spiritual devotion.
- Evaluate daily habits and make purposeful adjustments to enhance physical and spiritual well-being.

*Key Terms

Consented (Daniel 1:14)—Hebrew: *shama* (shaw-mah'): heard; obeyed; "agreed" (NIV).

Examine(d) (Daniel 1:13)—Hebrew: *ra'ah* (raw-aw): saw, inspected; "looked upon" (KJV); "compare" (NIV).

Favor (Daniel 1:9)—Hebrew: *checed* (kheh'-sed): kindness, mercy; "favour" (KJV).

Godliness (1 Timothy 4:8)—Greek: *eusebeia* (yoo-seb'-i-ah): devotion, piety toward God.

Profit(able) (1 Timothy 4:8)—Greek: *óphelimos* (o-fel'-ee-mos): beneficial, advantageous; "has value" (NIV); "profiteth" (KJV).

Servants (Daniel 1:12)—Hebrew: *'ebed* (eh'-bed): slaves; workers; bondservants; manservants.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



The Biblical Context

The book of Daniel contains narratives about Daniel and other exiles in captivity. Christian scholars classify it as prophecy, though technically it is an apocalypse. Prophecies look forward, while apocalyptic writings explain present suffering in light of God's future. The book is set in the sixth century BC but was written in the second century.

Daniel was a gifted young man captured during Nebuchadnezzar's raids. The king wanted strong, intelligent servants, so the Babylonian diet was imposed. This conflicted with Israelite dietary laws and religious convictions.

Although enslaved, Daniel relied on his godly conscience, prayer, and spiritual training. He knew that God was not tied to geography or circumstance. God was not merely a territorial deity but the Lord who must be obeyed wherever His people lived. Daniel resolved to remain faithful, even when it meant rejecting the king's food. His actions showed that obedience was not about convenience but about commitment.

The story emphasizes that spiritual health is inseparable from physical and emotional well-being. Daniel's life demonstrates how faith can guide daily living, even in the most challenging times.

Introduction

The newest fitness center in town, New Life Fitness, was unlike anything the community had ever seen. Fees were kept low, and those unable to pay were not turned away. The owner quietly waived the charges due to his personal commitment to helping people become fit.

The founder himself had long suffered from weakness in his limbs. He prayed for healing and promised God that if restored, he would dedicate his life to helping others achieve physical, emotional, and spiritual wholeness. God answered, and the founder followed through. He offered space, equipment, counselors, and trainers in ways that were both convenient and affordable.

He also added Scripture verses to the walls. One reads, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). Another was "Train yourself in godliness, for, while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Timothy 4:7b-8, NRSVUE). From Bible studies to brain exercises to bicep training, many people found themselves in better shape because of New Life Fitness. Their lives, bodies, and spirits were improved.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Daniel's Resolve and Boldness (*Daniel 1:8-14*)

KJV

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who

hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.

11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

NIV

8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel,

10 but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

11 Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,

12 "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink.

13 "Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see."

14 So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

Daniel's decision to refuse the king's food was guided not by preference but by spiritual conviction. Several factors were at play. First, the meat being served was unclean under Israelite law (see Leviticus 11). Second, the meat had not been drained of blood, as required by the Law (see Leviticus 17:10-14). Third, the food had been sacrificed to idols. Eating it would have violated covenant law.

Daniel resolved to stay faithful. His training as a young Israelite shaped his choices concerning both his body and spirit. His stance was risky—his decision could have cost him, his friends, and even the overseer their lives. After all, Daniel was a slave. How could a slave dare to question orders? But his confidence in God gave him boldness.

Remarkably, Daniel persuaded the official to allow a test. He proposed ten days of vegetables and water. This gave the overseer some protection while offering proof of Daniel's claim. Daniel's courage shows how faith and wisdom can work together. He honored God without arrogance and presented a plan that respected the overseer's fear.

Q WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Was Daniel a model for later leaders like Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, and Nelson Mandela, who prioritized obedience to God over human authority?

The Proof Is in the Pudding! (*Daniel 1:15-17*)

KJV

15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

NIV

15 At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food.

16 So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

At the end of ten days, Daniel and his friends looked healthier than the young men who ate the royal food. Their complexion was brighter, their bodies stronger, and their energy greater. The guard was convinced and removed the royal food, providing vegetables in its place.

This outcome surprised many. The king's table was considered the best, yet abstaining from it led to better results. Not only did God allow Daniel and his companions to be physically stronger, but He also granted them wisdom and understanding. Their learning surpassed that of their peers, despite Hebrew's not being the language of the empire. Daniel himself received the supernatural ability from God to understand visions and dreams.

This was striking in Babylonian culture. The empire prided itself on military power, advanced learning, and superior religion. Yet, God's people, who had been conquered, demonstrated greater strength and wisdom. Daniel's obedience, not indulgence, produced lasting blessings. The lesson is clear: God's commands are not restrictive burdens but protective gifts. Faithfulness led not only to physical health but also to spiritual insight.

Q WHAT DO YOU THINK?

When trials come, will God's ways prove themselves, or will fear and pressure lead us to compromise?

Godliness Is the Way to Go (1 Timothy 4:7-8)

KJV

7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

8 For 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.

NIV

7 Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.

8 For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

Paul understood the discipline of athletes in his time. Training was intense: running, wrestling, boxing, and throwing events all demanded strict routines. Nutrition and self-denial also played a role. Those who trained gained recognition and honor. Yet, Paul declared that while physical training had value, spiritual training was far greater.

Like Daniel, Paul stressed that godliness required intentional effort. Reading Scripture, prayer, and fasting are spiritual disciplines that strengthen believers. Scripture fills the mind with God's Word, showing His will and reminding believers of His promises. Prayer opens a conversation with God, bringing direction, comfort, and strength to our lives. Fasting sharpens focus, helping believers rely more fully on God.

Physical discipline benefits for a time, but godliness carries eternal value. Paul reminded Timothy that training for godliness holds promise for this life and the life to come. Spiritual health equips believers to endure trials and to serve faithfully. The call is clear: exercise the soul as diligently as the body.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How have you trusted God through discipline and faith, even in difficult or uncertain circumstances?

A Closing Thought

Pastors, deacons, missionaries, and members visit the sick. This is vital, even when distances are great. Ministry to the sick is not always limited to visits. Churches can host insurance drives, offer health fairs, and help with medical co-pays. Weekly reminders—like Medicare deadlines or diet tips—also help members care for body and spirit. Such practices align with Jesus' words: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).