

*“Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”*

1 Timothy 4:7

Football coach Tom Landry is often quoted as saying that the task of a coach is to help people do what they would rather avoid in order to become what they ultimately hope to be. The same truth applies to the Christian life. Following Christ means intentionally practicing habits that do not always come naturally, such as prayer, Scripture, worship, and acts of service, so that over time we are shaped into lives marked by godliness. As Scripture reminds us, we are to discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4:7).

I think most people would like to be able to say that they have become better people, that they have pursued the shaping of self and world to the best of their abilities. Most of us long for the assurance that we are, in some tangible way, living into the image of God placed within us; “endowed by our Creator.”

We like to think that religious pursuits are as natural as other drives in our lives, such as our desire for love, air, or food. In one sense, this is true. Most of us feel a pull toward God, toward order, purpose, beauty, and meaning. But this is only the beginning, just as falling in love is only the beginning of living a life of love. Healthy and enduring relationships require effort, self-discipline, and mutual commitment for the good of all involved. We cannot expect others to perfect our loving for us, nor can we avoid the work required to make our homes places of peace and security. That responsibility rests with us.

In much the same way, we cannot rely on another person to step in and repair our spiritual lives. Each of us must walk our own faith journey. We alone are responsible for taking the time to pray, to reflect, and to attend to the life of faith. We are called to discipline our faith so that it becomes a place in which we can truly dwell, learning not merely to do what we want, but what we ought to do, and becoming what we have always hoped to be, recreated in the likeness and love of Jesus Christ, set apart for godliness in a world that often feels starved for peace and hope.

As we move into the season of Lent, a time of introspection and renewed spiritual commitment, let us resolve to explore the depths of the human soul. May we discipline ourselves in study, prayer, and practice in all that we say and do, so that we might intentionally become what we have always hoped to be, the person God calls us to be, and so that our world might grow closer to what we desire for ourselves and for our children.

Yours in Christ,